The KLONDIKE CLAN



S. HALL YOUNG







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THE KLONDIKE CLAN



BY HIS SIDE A BIG MALAMUTE DOG

THE KLONDIKE CLAN

A TALE OF THE GREAT STAMPEDE

BY

S. HALL YOUNG
Author of
"Alaska Days with John Muir"

ILLUSTRATED



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To

My Comrades of the

Great Social Order

Of the Northwest—

THE ARCTIC BROTHERHOOD

CHILKOOT PASS

And you, too, banged at the Chilkoot,
That rock-locked gate to the golden door!
These thunder-built steeps have words built to suit,
And whether you prayed or whether you swore
'Twere one where it seemed that an oath was a prayer—
Seemed God couldn't care,
Seemed God wasn't there!

And you, too, climbed to the Klondike
And talked, as a friend, to those five-horned stars!
With muckluck shoon and with talspike
You, too, bared head to the bars,
The heaven-built bars where morning is born,
And drank with maiden morn
From Klondike's golden horn!

And you, too, read by the North lights
Such sermons as never men say!
You sat and sat with the midnights
That sit and that sit all day:
You heard the silence, you heard the room,
Heard the glory of God in the gloom
Where the icebergs boom and boom!

Then come to my Sunland, my soldier,
Aye, come to my heart and to stay;
For better crusader or bolder
Bared never a breast to the fray.
And whether you prayed or whether you cursed
You dared the best and you dared the worst
That ever brave man durst.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

FOREWORD

ALASKA and the Yukon Territory of Canada together form a country whose whole atmosphere is surcharged with romance. The old days of the Indian and the fur-trader held a buried store of adventure and mystery, of which but a very little has yet been unearthed. The mighty mountain ranges that rim the great bowl of the Yukon; the still higher ranges and peaks that float in clouds within it; the river itself, with its scores of tributaries coming mysteriously from unexplored wilds; the vise-like cold of the winters and wonderful life and beauty of the summers; these all enhance the poetic interest of the far Northwest.

When gold first began to be discovered in this neglected corner of the world, and hordes of eager adventurers stormed across the mountain-ranges of the coast and along the southern and western shores of Alaska and up its rivers, the romance of great gold-camps was added to that of the game-stocked wilderness.

This field has been prolific in literature, and the traveler, the poet and the story-teller have tilled it diligently, and sometimes successfully. But the author of the present volume feels that a large section of this rich field is still virgin ground. He has spent almost his whole life in Alaska, and has seen it change from a despised and ridiculed country, for

which the purchase-price of seven million dollars was considered exorbitant, to its present status as "the richest section of either American continent"; from "Seward's Folly" to "Seward's Wisdom," from "Uncle Sam's Ice Box" to "The Storehouse of the Nation." He has lived among and studied its natives, has explored unmapped wilds, has paddled his canoe or driven his dogs over almost all sections of Alaska, and sampled all its climates. He has seen its white population grow from less than two hundred to sixty thousand. He has followed all the great gold stampedes and many of the smaller ones, and has been at the birth of most of the camps and towns of the Northwest. He has lived the life and played the game.

Alaska is the author's home. He considers it the best of all lands to live in, to work in, to die in. He esteems its people as among the bravest, cleanest and most admirable in all the world—the survival of the fittest, the winners of a mighty battle, the sifted wheat, the separated nuggets. He believes that very few of those who have written of this strong and typical American race have done it full justice.

The region known vaguely as The Klondike lies in Canada, but close to the Alaskan border. Gold was discovered, and the first claims staked there, by citizens of the United States—old miners from Forty Mile Creek and Circle City in Alaska. During the first year of the Klondike Stampede it was generally believed throughout the Republic, that at least the greater portion of the Klondike, including the richest creeks, lay on the Alaska side of the line between the two countries.

A popular cartoon of the day in a New York journal

depicted the British Lion sitting close to the Alaska line, on the other side of which was written "The Klondike." He was saying "I wonder if I couldn't inch over a bit."

Fully five-sixths of the stampeders were from the United States, and the great majority of the claims were owned by citizens of this country. Although Canada organized its government, sent its officials and collected its taxes, the United States sent freely its citizens of all classes, and its mission boards sent in ministers to look after them. When the Stampede reached high tide in the summer of '98, and the vast majority of the eager host were disappointed in securing gold mines on the British side, they sailed by thousands down the Yukon to Alaska and spread over that vast region, prospecting for the precious metal; and with them went their missionaries.

In the religious and humane work required for this host in the wilderness, the motto of the Arctic Brotherhood has been adopted—No Boundary Line Here.

This book is an attempt to depict the scenes of the great Klondike Stampede as they occurred, and the stampeders as they were. The incidents are more history than fiction. The characters are types. Some of them are attempted portraits, others composites, still others, ideals. Many of the adventures of the story occurred under the personal observation of the author or that of his friends.

"The Parson" is in no sense or degree a portrait of any one man; much less of the author himself. Many of his adventures, deeds and words are actualities; but the man is an ideal—rather what the author

and others would like to have been, than what they were. The volume attempts to depict with fidelity and truth the indomitable, joyous, humorous and earnest spirit of the pioneers of the Northwest.

The author acknowledges with gratitude the helpful suggestions of friends, some of them authors of far greater experience and power than himself. Some of these have advised that he drop the fiction form and write a simple narrative of personal experience and observation. Others have advised more romance, mystery and adventure. The author has chosen a course like that of Tennyson in *The Princess:*

I moved as in a strange diagonal,
And maybe neither pleased myself nor them.

NEW YORK. S. H. Y.

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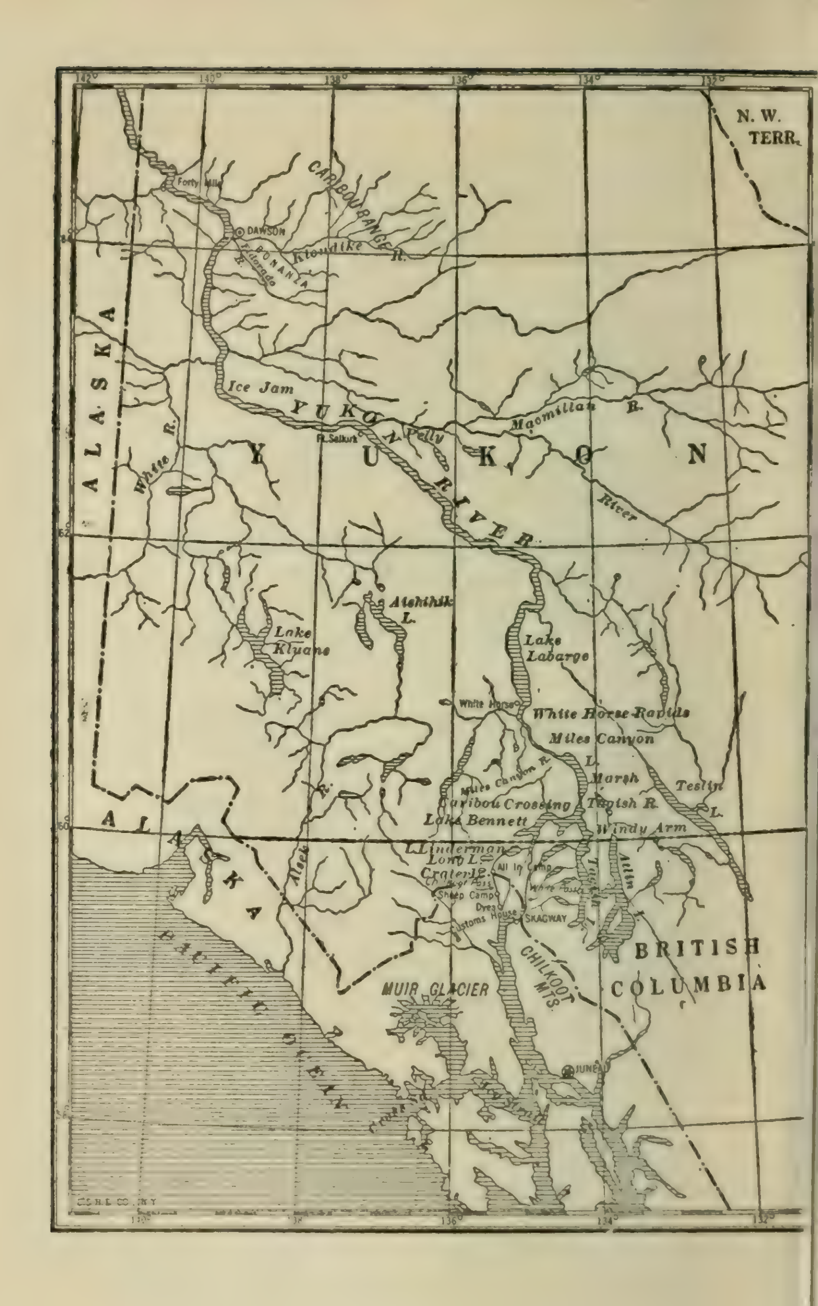
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THE TITANIC LETTERS A B, THE INSPIRATION AND SYMBOL OF THE ARCTIC BROTHERHOOD

BOOK I
THE GREAT STAMPEDE

I

THE GATHERING OF THE CLAN

THE disk of camp-bread rose six feet in the air, seemingly by its own volition, displaying its dull, white surface, turned slowly over showing the other side delicately ringed and spotted with brown, and descended to exactly the same spot from which it rose—the Parson's long-handled frying pan. Almost at the same instant a thin, wide, brown flapjack swayed and gyrated to the same height, flopped and lit safely in Scotty's hot griddle. The spectators applauded.

"Give that to the women and the *cheechakos*," jeered the Parson, indicating the little sheet-iron Klondike stove which Walters and Schofield were bunglingly trying to set up. "A roaring spruce fire for me, with bean-pot, coffee-pot and dried apple-kettle hung above it, bacon sizzling in the long-handled frying pan over it, and the camp-bread standing against a log to bake before it. Why, how are you going to flip a flapjack six feet in the air and catch it properly on the raw side, if you have to do your cooking inside a little tent into which you must crawl like a worm, and where you can't move your foot? The Klondike stove is a malicious invention of Mammon, the mean little god of the Klondike Stampede."

"Why have you got one, then?" laughed the Colo-

nel, pointing to the Parson's pack-strap, in which was secured a stove of the latest type, three feet long, a foot and a half wide and a foot in depth, with legs, telescoped stove-pipe, and granite-ware dishes and cooking utensils stowed in oven and fireplace.

"I'm ashamed of it," replied the Parson, "but necessity is upon me. I've joined the procession; and the trail will lead above the timber-line and end in a cabin. You can't have your camp-fire kitchen outside when it's sixty below. And I've got to cook for my packers and lure them along the trail with hot biscuit and beans. But be sure the stove will stay in the pack-straps whenever I can have a fire like this."

Scotty was, as usual, doing three or four things at once—tossing his flapjacks, toasting bacon over the coals, stewing dried apples, and stirring in a kettle a doubtful-looking mess in which were red "sour-dough" beans, canned tomatoes, onions, rice and desiccated potatoes, with a chunk of salt pork. "Esau's red pottage," he called it.

Grumbling comparisons in Bible simile came intermittently from his lips. The pork was "as salt as Lot's wife," the pepper-sauce "as hot as Nebuchadnezzar's furnace," the dried potatoes "as stiff as the necks of the Israelites."

"Scotty," quizzed Walters, who was now leaning comfortably against a stump, "if you only looked the part; if your face was as pious as your language, the Parson might well turn over his job to you."

"My face is my own and as the good Lord made it. But I'm thinkin' you're one of the vain ones whose 'tongue walketh through the earth,'" replied Scotty.

Colonel De Long, sprawling lazily on a log, pulled at his long-stemmed German pipe. Schofield, the New York reporter, was writing, his note-book propped against a sack of flour. The little Doctor, his face the picture of gloom, stared moodily into the fire.

A chuckle from Scotty, whose eyes were everywhere, drew the attention of the others to the two women of the party, Mrs. De Long and Mrs. Schofield, who had stealthily abstracted one of the Parson's disks of camp-bread, and were making awkward attempts with a cold frying pan behind a tree to toss the cake and catch it on the other side, as the Parson and Scotty were doing. The cake fell to the ground again and again, to the suppressed amusement of the little group of men. When at last the Colonel's wife succeeded in catching the descending disk a rattling fusillade of handclapping showed the women that they were discovered. Laughing and red, they came to the fire.

"You needn't make fun of us," pouted Mrs. Schofield. "You are more awkward with the pack-straps and the camping than we are with the flapjacks."

"Indeed they are," said the Parson, "and you've set the lazy scamps a good example. All of them need to be practicing for the trail."

The little company had assembled, they themselves scarcely knowing how or why, by that natural law of attraction which draws kindred spirits together—that creates in five minutes a friendship that lasts forever. The Parson selected the camp and the others somehow got into it. Or, rather, the old pioneer who had built the only house yet erected on the site of Skagway chose to locate the Parson in front of his substantial

log cabin, the two being friends since the old Cassiar days.

"Jest take possession, Parson," he said. "House, stove, kittles, bunk—they're all yours. All I ask is that you don't carry 'em off with you."

So the Parson pitched his tent in front of the house, the Colonel put up his close by, with those of Schofield, Scotty and Walter Walters not far away. This happened two or three days before, and now the Parson and Scotty had undertaken to provide dinner for the crowd.

The ladies spread the newspaper tablecloths on boxes and camp-kits, and set on them a varied assortment of granite-ware dishes, while the men hungrily sniffed the appetizing odors. The Parson and Scotty were dodging the smoke and testing the contents of the various stewpans and kettles, while the disks of camp-bread and the flapjacks still ascended and were skillfully caught again.

Suddenly a small, firm brown hand slid down the handle of the Parson's frying pan as he was about to toss a cake, and seized the handle with the dish towel around it, while another hand detached his and gently pushed him away. The cake was loosened from the griddle with a deft twist, ascended high and was caught with absolute accuracy.

"I'll finish this, Mr. Parson," said a sweet, brisk voice. "Auntie May would like to speak with you."

The bewildered Parson had only time to glance at the slim figure of the boy-girl who had taken from him his culinary task, when, following the gesture of her free hand, he saw a lady standing just outside the circle.

As he stepped up to her with outstretched hand—for there was no doubting the genuineness of either girl or woman—she placed her own within it, at the same time handing him a letter.

"You must excuse Viva's abruptness," she began. "The dear child has lived such an independent outdoor life that what would be rudeness in another is only honesty and kindliness in her. We have just landed from the steamboat and came at once to you."

The Parson opened the letter. It was from an old seminary chum. The address was a small town in Montana.

"Dear Brother," it ran; "this will introduce Mrs. Randall and her niece, Viva Carroll. Mrs. R. is a widow; the girl an only child and motherless since babyhood. They are the very choicest of my flock. They are going to find Viva's father, who went into the Klondike over the Chilcoot Pass early last spring. He has not been heard from since he crossed the mountains.

"Mr. Carroll was a miner in early manhood, and of late years has had a cattle ranch here. Two years ago a fall injured his head, and since that time he has been somewhat flighty and erratic. Financial embarrassment, due to wild speculation, still more unsettled him; and the new gold excitement reawakened the wanderlust in him. He left home last March, as if to buy cattle, and the next Viva heard from him came in a letter from Alaska.

"The girl and her father were such devoted comrades that, as the months passed without news of him, the child's anxiety grew to such a pitch that there was no holding her here. Her aunt, who has been both mother and sister to her, would not be left behind.

So they are joining the mad horde of gold-seekers, to try to find Mr. Carroll and bring him home.

"I know you will help them all you can. I do not use the word 'protect,' for I cannot conceive of a man who would have either the will or the power to harm such a girl as Viva. Her college education has fitted her for any society, while her outdoor life has made her a true child of nature. But the innate purity and force of her! You'll see!

"I imagine that after a little you'll find yourself the debtor, try as you will—that you will confess that you have been more helped by both of these women than you have been able to help. The aunt, though city-bred and thoroughly feminine, is a strong, true woman. But Viva! Well, if you are a better camper, mountaineer, hunter, fisherman or canoeist than she, you are a wonder, that's all. I commend you to each other."

The Parson's quick hand went out to the lady for another reassuring clasp, and, with a glance toward the camp-fire, he said: "I see that your niece has improved and finished my dinner-getting. Come and meet these ladies and join our camp-feast."

"Ye've lost yer job, Parson," cried Scotty. "The lassie has you beat a mile."

The Parson had not been away ten minutes, yet the camp seemed to have been reorganized. Certainly it had a new head. The bright young girl, with not a hint of domineering in her manner, but showing the experienced camper in every movement, had quietly taken hold of the dinner, and the whole circle revolved about her. Scotty was her able lieutenant, and Walters her devoted slave. Schofield rushed for another bucket of water, Mrs. De Long and Mrs. Schofield added two

more plates on another box dragged into the charmed circle. Even Dr. McGowan ceased glowering at the fire, to follow the girl's movements with his eyes. She took her place instantly and naturally, as queen of that small realm. Her pretty, piquant face, her big hazel eyes with an emerald glint to them, her saucy nose, her roguish mouth, her small, erect, alert figure, her red-gold hair—made a most captivating picture. Her name seemed altogether fitting, for she radiated life as a diamond flashes its colored lights.

Another guest was to be added to the little company before the fine hospitality of the wilderness could find its expression in the midday meal. As the Parson was surveying the final preparations for dinner and the seating of the guests his face suddenly lit up with such incredulous surprise and delight, that all his companions followed his gaze. A very tall man had halted beyond the various heaps of sacks and boxes belonging to the members of the party. His air of bashfulness—almost of fear—was in curious contrast to his gaunt but powerful frame, his gnarled and rugged face, his grizzled hair and beard. He seemed on the point of flight. He eyed the busy women as a fascinated bird eyes the charming serpent.

"Long Sandy!" shouted the Parson, rushing up to the newcomer, and dragging him toward the fire as he pumped his hand. "You blessed old giant! Why, I've been asking after and longing for you for fifteen years. This is Alexander McCullough, my closest friend of the old Indian days in Alaska," he announced to the rest. "The good Lord has sent him to make our company complete."

Before Sandy could recover his senses he was seated on a box brought by Walters, with another provided by Schofield, set before him. Mrs. De Long covered the improvised table with a newspaper and placed dishes upon it, while Viva filled his plate with the "red pottage" and his cup with coffee.

"You must excuse the rough table and dishes," apologized the Colonel's wife. "We have hardly found ourselves yet."

The old miner was embarrassed. He had not spoken to ladies like that for many years. He struggled for words, and when he uttered his first sentence it was what he afterward called "a bad break" which filled him with shame whenever he recalled it.

"It don't matter," he said, "if you've lots of nice love."

The Parson did not smile. His throat filled as he visioned the grand old man of the wilderness, living his clean though rough life in camps full of Indian squaws and other camp followers of whiter skins but blacker souls, hungering through his lonely years for the very thing of which he had spoken so awkwardly.

Checking the amusement of the others by glance and tone, the Parson answered: "You are dead right, old friend. That is the greatest thing in the world; and we'll find plenty of it, even along this crazy trail, if we look rightly for it."

When all were busy with their plates the Parson turned to Mrs. Randall: "I think the solution of your problem and Viva's has come in the person of Long Sandy. He is the one man of all the world I would have asked for to pilot you over the Pass."

II

CAMP CONFUSION

A BEDLAM of raucous noises filled the air. Wagons were creaking with heavy loads, and their wheels banging and scraping against the rubble of the upper beach. Men were calling to each other as quails lately flushed whistle for reassemblage. Mules were braying and dogs howling.

The first act of that strangest drama of the latter half of the nineteenth century was being staged. One might call the present scene a rough rehearsal. The stage properties, the scenario, the actors, the " supers " were being assembled. The grotesque God of Confusion reigned supreme. Within two or three weeks twenty-five thousand men had come to Skagway, the jumbled, orderless, streetless camp in the woods on the northern extremity of Lynn Canal. This is that singular body of salt water which, with its continuance, Chatham Strait, runs through the islands and mountains of southeastern Alaska direct as an arrow for two hundred miles from the ocean. The great Klondike Stampede was on!

The stage-setting of the drama is wonderful. The background, to whatever point of the compass you turn, is of that softened style of grandeur found only on the Alaskan coast. More fantastic elements enter into the scenery here than almost any other of the coast

landscapes. Follow Lynn Canal southward until its blue-green waters shade to amethyst in the distance. See how the mighty mountain walls burst upward from its shores, rising almost sheer above the clouds, dark with evergreen forests at the base, curving high breasts gray with early snow, then beyond pushing dizzy, rugged white peaks skyward.

Notice that highest mountain to the westward. What a sublime Indian profile! Stern and enduring, yet gazing heavenward " with upward look intent of steadfast faith." " Face Mountain " we are to call it, when we have time for names.

Now look along its base to the west prong of Lynn Canal stretching away beyond our vision, this mountain spur between Skagway and Dyea rivers shutting off our view. See the queer fleet; craft of all kinds and sizes, steamboats, schooners, sloops, " knockdown boats " brought up from Tacoma and hastily put together, whaleboats, dories and Indian canoes—all frantically steaming, sailing, pulling or paddling toward the busy camp of Dyea, which, because of its being the gateway to the Chilcoot Pass, will grow within the next few months into a thriving, bustling, bragging little city, with a newspaper, many saloons, dance-halls, hotels and barracks with a company of United States soldiers; yet destined ere another year passes to be utterly deserted, its houses and furniture, stoves and dishes left for whoever will take them.

Face north now and look high again. Huge granite rocks, glacier-scored and rounded, in the spur between the two rivers, frown down upon you. There, in those mountain gorges and ravines, you may still see the

fragmentary outlines of what in the spring will be so clearly defined by the lines of snow—the titanic letters *A B,* which are to be the inspiration and symbol of the great fraternity of the Northwest, the Arctic Brotherhood.

Now look east and complete the circle. High mountains again, fairly leaning over to look down upon and wonder at this fuss of human ants; twin cones, the highest and sharpest of which, nameless as yet, is to be christened Mount Dewey next spring, when a certain little scrap in Manila Harbor shall suggest the name. Dark forests of spruce and cedar climb high up these mountains and silver cascades tumble down their sides.

What a deep and noble frame these mountains make; and what a ridiculous little picture this narrow valley at the head of the bay presents! Three large passenger steamers lie in the harbor out beyond the mud flats. This big camp of Skagway is only two or three weeks old, and there has been no time to build wharves. But it takes only a day or two for a hundred workmen to build a huge lighter; so there they are, a dozen of them, piled high with all kinds of goods. Some are beached, and, as the tide is out, wagons, pack horses, hand-carts, wheelbarrows and men with pack-straps are alongside to take away the goods, and men in flannel shirt-sleeves are swarming over the piles of boxes and gunny sacks, pulling and hauling, sweating and swearing, trying to find and secure their property. The freight clerk has been driven over the side of the lighter long ago, and is sauntering up the beach somewhere with his shipping lists under his arm.

Such aggregations of men speedily make their own unwritten and unformulated rules, and enforce them, too. The simple law here is: Take your own shipping bill, find your own goods, pile them together and guard them until your wagon comes for them. If you can't find enough flour sacks with your mark on them it is a sign that somebody else has yours; therefore you are to take somebody else's until your list is full. If somebody else objects argue the matter with him, using your shipping bill and your fists, but on no account draw your pistol; that would mean the instant combination of everybody else on the lighter to throw you off. Preserve as much of your temper as you conveniently can, but get your full quota of goods. Keep your wits about you, for there are scores of thieves who will have great stores full of looted goods in Skagway next winter to sell "at a sacrifice."

Scows, lighters, dories, whaleboats, skiffs, canoes and awkward box-boats line the waterfront and the mud of the creek. On the stretch of gravel and cobblestones above high-tide mark is a jumble of tarpaulin-covered heaps of provisions and other goods, and scattered among them all kinds of implements, rough furniture, piles of lumber, queer machines, carts, wagon wheels—everything useful or useless that the Seattle or Tacoma man-with-something-to-sell could unload upon the embryo gold miner.

Beyond, in the edge of the evergreen woods and extending far within them, is the orderless city of tents. There is not the semblance of a street anywhere. Stable tents, hotel tents, eating-house tents and dwellings of a day are stuck around wherever the load



A JUMBLE OF TARPAULIN-COVERED HEAPS OF PROVISIONS AND OTHER GOODS

of goods happened to be dumped, or wherever a sufficiently level spot has beckoned. They stand at all angles, and the guy-ropes of one may stretch right athwart the door of another, inducing profanity both on the part of the man tripped up by them and the occupants of the jerked tent.

Nature is yielding her dominion but sullenly, the gnarled or sodden trees standing forth among the tents, while their straighter and drier neighbors have given up their trunks and branches to the needs of the camp. The thick, dank moss is spreading a futile carpet over the muck and stones, to be cut by hobnailed boot and wagon wheel and mixed with the foulness it strives to conceal. Blueberry and salmonberry bushes are found even in the sleeping tents, and the "devil's club" offers promising handles to the unwary *cheechako's* grasp, only to fill his hand with cactus-like thorns and his mouth with cursing and bitterness. Rotten logs, newly cut stumps of big trees and piles of brush are threaded by a hundred narrow, muddy paths; and along all of them men are rushing like ants, and like ants bearing unwieldly burdens, making futile dashes here and there, blundering against one another or blocking each other's way. The utter disregard of the rights and convenience of everybody else, the insolent selfishness of this crowd as each one pushes and rushes after his own particular business, is what would most of all strike an onlooker, if one could be found who was not himself too busy pushing and rushing to take time to look and ponder.

The pioneer's log house and the circling tents of our friends presented the nearest approach to order

in all the great, sprawling camp. A road deeply indented by wagon wheels and horses' hoofs wound its serpentine way in front of them; and along this trail, which was the beginning of the White Pass Road, moved a constant procession of men with packs, horses, mules, burros, and even oxen, laden with provisions. Substantial wagons, one-horse carts and wheelbarrows squeaked, complained and rumbled along the bumpy trail.

"Right here is the spot on which to study the human race," said the Colonel, heaping his granite plate again with the stew. "The types are all here; and, what's more, this scramble has torn the masks off. Here a man can't lie successfully. His inner being comes to the surface, squeezed forth by the stress of new and hard experiences, and you see him as he is. Hear that snarling voice down there? That's the man who prayed so fervently at your meeting Sunday."

"No, Colonel," protested the Parson. "You've got the thing exactly wrong. This camp is the last place in the world in which to get a true impression of human nature. The men are as topsy-turvy as their goods. They are all beside themselves; they'll 'come to' after a while."

"I think the Colonel is right," interposed Schofield, the young newspaper man, who, with his wife, a beautiful society belle, but now tanned and freckled like a boy, sat by a soap box, the two eating with iron spoons from the same plate of beans.

"I've just been to Lake Bennett, going by the White Pass trail and returning by the Chilcoot, and from what I've seen and heard I've come to the con-

clusion that most of the Christians who have scaled those awful rocks left all their religion at the base of the mountains and never found it again on the other side."

"Gracious! what holy places Skagway and Dyea will be after all this crowd sheds its piety down on them."

So spoke the blue-eyed young lawyer, Walters, the Parson's special chum. With Viva he was replenishing plates and cups. Her ripple of laughter was grateful applause.

"My boy," chided the Parson, "religion is of such peculiar stuff that the more of it we give away the more we have; but what we lose nobody else ever finds."

"This whole crowd," grumbled the Colonel, "is utterly, hopelessly, insanely selfish, and the law of the trail is the old one: 'Every one for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.'"

A laden pack-train of cayuse ponies came by, threading the crooked, irregular trail. There were fifteen or twenty of them in charge of four men, who were dashing hither and thither as the horses strayed into bypaths or turned to nibble the bunches of rank grass. A medley of strong language in broken German-English, Southern drawl, h-less Cockney and Western slang was shouted at the animals without appreciable effect. Just in front of our friends a pinto cayuse began to buck. His poorly tied pack was soon hanging under his belly and rapidly disintegrating. The black-haired Southerner rushed up to the horse with a profane objurgation and began jerk-

ing his head and kicking him. The broad-faced German hurried up with a club. The bucking cayuse sidled almost within the circle of the camp.

There was instant commotion. The Colonel rose to his feet and stepped in front of his wife, who cowered on her box with her fingers in her ears. Mrs. Schofield clung convulsively to her husband. Long Sandy rose to his six-feet-six with his hand upraised in a commanding gesture. The Parson took Mrs. Randall's arm to lead her out of danger. The Doctor broke for his tent with a cry of dismay. Only Scotty sat still and went on eating.

When the disturbance commenced Walters turned to Viva with the intention of getting her away out of reach of the prancing horses, but she was too quick for him.

"Here; take this, please," she said, handing him her plate.

Before he guessed her intention she had stepped quickly to the charging cayuse. "Stop that," she said in her quiet, low but distinct voice to the furious Southerner who was struggling with the pony.

"I'll take him," she added, disengaging the man's hand and grasping the bridle.

With a pat of the pony's neck, a twist of the bit and a soothing word she brought the cayuse out of the trail into a clear space between two tents.

"Drop that stick," she commanded the big German, who had pulled up in astonishment, "and lead that big horse in beside this one. His pack needs to be changed as well as this. It is hurting his back.

"Tell the other men to take the rest of the train

on out of the way," she ordered the Southerner, who was standing apologetic and ashamed, with his exaggerated cowboy hat in his hand.

The girl's commands were instantly obeyed.

"Now," she said to the Southerner, whom she recognized as the boss of the packers, "unbuckle that strap and ease down the load. Bring the packages here. Now double the blanket—so; now the pack-saddle. This is not a vicious horse. He was only protesting, as he had a right to do, against an awkward and uncomfortable pack."

Skillfully tying the heavy boxes together in such a way as to fit them to the saddle, she helped the man swing them up to the now docile horse and dispose the sack of flour between them. Then she adjusted the girths, and, gathering the rope in her hands, with a few passes made so swiftly that the eyes of the men could hardly follow them, she threw the diamond hitch and cinched all tight.

She made the German remove the pack from the large horse and disposed pack-saddle and blankets so as to give ease to the lump that was already rising on his back. Noticing that the German carried a pack-strap, she quietly appropriated it and fixed in it a double sack of flour, weighing a hundred pounds. The rest of the load she adjusted comfortably upon the animal and made all snug.

"You'll take that sack on your own back," she said to the big German; "the horse is overloaded. He would have been ruined in a few hours."

The German was too dumbfounded to protest. This slim girl who did such wonderful things so quietly

and ordered him about so confidently was so different from the stolid, servile peasant women he had known as to be hardly recognizable as belonging to the same species. His English all left him. Murmuring "*Danke schön, Fräulein,*" he shouldered his pack, and, taking the grateful horse by the bridle, led him up the trail.

The Southerner still stood with his hat in his hand. "Miss," he said, "you ah sure a witch with a hawse. I hope you will pahdon the language I was using. I didn't know theh was a lady within a mile of the trail."

"Your language I hardly heard," answered the girl, looking him through with level gaze, "but I saw what you did to those horses."

"I am ve'y sorry for the hawses," drawled the young man, "but mo' sorry to have hurt yoh feelings. We all are ignorant of this business and just natchelly lost our tempers. We'll learn better, if you'll forgive us this time. We are not always brutes. If only you could give us a few lessons on managing hawses!"

His manner was so humble and yet so gentlemanly that the girl relented and gave him her hand. "Say no more," she said. "I was born a Montana cowgirl, and we have had many green hands on our ranch who were worse than you at the start, but they made good. I'll come to your camp and teach you boys the diamond hitch."

"If you only will!" he exclaimed rapturously. "We'll pay you twenty dollars an hour for the lessons."

Mrs. Schofield kissed Viva with fervor. "You

wonderful darling!" she said. "You're worth a dozen men."

"Our Guardian Angel!" said the gallant Colonel.

"The Queen o' the Klondike!" was Scotty's exclamation.

"Your pastor was right," the Parson remarked to Mrs. Randall, as the whole company resumed their seats and their dinner. "Your niece needs no protection. She is rather the safeguard of our whole company. Why, that child could go alone from one end of Alaska to the other unscathed and spotless."

"Oh, that's nothing for Viva," answered the lady lightly. "She was just being her natural, everyday self. She has never learned to be afraid."

Young Walters said nothing. He silently handed the girl her plate and cup, replenishing both. But the look of devotion on his face was good to see, and the unformulated thought of his heart was "This is my Goddess, my Woman of all women; and I'll follow and serve her to the end of life."

III

WHICH PASS?

THE dinner was over. Mrs. De Long was putting her fingers, so wonderful when on the keyboard of a piano, to the primitive use of washing dishes; and Mrs. Schofield and Mrs. Randall were helping. Viva had gone for her dog. The Colonel had resumed his pipe. The reporter, keen to write up the story of Viva and the horses, was making his pencil fly, a cigar between his teeth. The Parson, Scotty and Long Sandy, on a triangle of boxes, with heads together, were discussing the two trails. The Doctor, sitting humped up on a warbag apart from the others, was again glowering at the fire, while Walters was dreaming, his eyes on the trail down which the girl had disappeared.

"Which of the two passes is the more practicable for us?" asked the Parson.

"The Chilcoot, just now," answered Long Sandy without hesitation. "That procession is moving. The other is halted, dead."

"Yes," assented Scotty. "I looked the White Pass over yesterday as far as The Summit. It sure is a holy terror. That canyon between White Pass City and The Summit is hell-broke-loose."

"Rather, hell-tied-up-and-raving," said the Parson. "They are calling it 'Dead Horse Gulch' now. They

say that over two thousand horses have been killed there already, and more are dying every day. I saw one place where a dozen or more were wedged with their packs in a narrow gorge, those on top with their heels in the air, kicking and screaming. The dreadful, half-human shrieks of those poor mangled brutes rang in my ears all night."

"Like banshees in an Irish bog," said Scotty. "I saw them pile up there. 'Twas a fearsome sicht. A big horse, heavy loaded, two hundred feet up the mountainside, fell over. He knocked off two just below him. Down they came, bowling over others like tenpins, rolling over and over, smashing legs and necks, sweeping the short zigzags. The men could dodge the falling beasts, but horses couldn't. Crunch! crash! they lit on those sharp rocks at the bottom like chunks of meat in the knives of a sausage-grinder. It made me fair sick! It'll take a full week to cut up them horses and clear the trail."

"The men would have saved their money and time," replied Sandy, "if they had blasted the rocks and made a decent trail; but they are all too crazy mad for that."

The Colonel broke into the conversation, tossing his magnificent snow-white mane in a characteristic gesture. "It's a brutal business—this gold-hunting. Why should we, miserable little human bugs, subject three thousand of these noble beasts to death by torture and starvation just to sate our insane gold-lust?"

"But the men have almost as hard a time as the horses," protested the Parson, "and they take the same perilous chances. I saw an instance of this

farther along the trail above Dead Horse Gulch. I was making my way up the sidling rock-strewn trail when the pack animals ahead of me were halted. I slipped ahead, scrambling over the mossy rocks above the trail to see what the trouble was. I found a dark-complexioned man struggling with a cayuse in a narrow place, right on the edge of the precipice. The horse seemed determined to commit suicide and the man was risking his own life to save that of his horse.

" I helped to get the cayuse into a safe niche so that the swearing men behind could get their own animals along. The man's name was Martin from Louisville, Kentucky. He pointed over the cliff to another cayuse of his which had fallen off and was heels up on a little ledge below the trail. I rescued it and helped Martin along a mile or two. He was a companionable fellow and very grateful. He insisted on my taking lunch with him and baked the most terrific flapjacks I ever tried to eat. They seemed all soda. He said an old-timer had told him to take ' two grabs and a pinch ' of coffee to the man, and he thought he'd try the same rule with the soda in making flapjacks."

" The trouble is that this is an army of tenderfeet," said Sandy. " I've seen many gold stampedes, but never one before where the men were so helpless. Not one in twenty ever had such an experience. They don't know a horse from a sawhorse. A lot of city lawyers! "—speaking the word with contempt, as if it meant the extreme of incompetence.

" That hits ye hard, me lad," said Scotty, winking at Walters; and Long Sandy, realizing that he had

been guilty of another "break," looked at the stalwart young man deprecatingly.

"Walters is a city lawyer," explained the Parson, "but he isn't true to type. He missed his vocation when he studied law. He'll find it in the Klondike. Those big hands will be feeling for a pick handle, and those broad shoulders are twitching to be hoisting pay-dirt on a windlass."

"How about yours?" retorted the young lawyer.

"Oh, my calling includes everything. The only part of my theological training that really counts is what the mountains and forests and the men and other creatures I find among them have taught me.

"But, Scotty, it is up to us to get our goods over to Dyea as soon as we can. The White Pass is impossible this fall. And we'll need to be in a desperate hurry. God pity the thousands of poor fellows who have spent all their money to get their goods to Skagway and halfway along this trail, only to have the road blockaded now and their horses killed. And old King Winter charging down on them with his legions!

"But what about yourself, Sandy? Why are you here; and where is your outfit? They told me you had cleaned up thirty thousand on Forty Mile last year, and gone outside to find your relations and spend the rest of your life taking it easy."

"I did have some such fool notion," Sandy confessed. "Just a year ago I finished my clean-up. I sent the bulk of my dust out to Seattle with some of the boys, and went up to the Klondike to see the new strike. I built me a good cabin at Dawson and wintered there. I located a wildcat claim on upper El-

dorado—force of habit, I guess. But I spent most of the winter hunting caribou to keep the boys in something fresh. Last March I hit the trail up the Yukon and came out over the Chilcoot Pass. I lifted my money at Seattle and went east to hunt up my kin. All I could locate was one sister, a widow with no children. She lives in Missouri, in the foothills of the Ozarks. It is a little village of unpainted frame and log houses, twenty miles from a railroad. My poor old sister hailed me as one risen from the dead. I deposited my thirty thousand in the only bank in the county, and told sister that I had come to take care of her for the rest of her life. I reckon I was the richest man in the county. But how long do you think I stayed there?"

"Not long, I imagine," answered the Parson.

"Just four weeks," admitted Sandy. "I like to have died in that time. My sister was old and broken with sorrow and poverty—just a husk of a woman. She'd sit in the chimney corner all evening, pulling on an old corncob pipe. We hadn't seen each other for fifty years. We were strangers and never could get acquainted.

"I'd go to the grocery store and try to talk to the old fellows that sat around on the boxes with their feet up, chewing and spitting tobacco. We couldn't talk. We had nothing in common. All they knew was corn and hogs and their own ailments. They never read anything.

"And the grub! I nearly starved. Soggy cornbread and greasy salt pork—no decent bacon. And no real milk—only the thin, tasteless stuff they called

fresh milk. I tramped to five different towns before I got a can of condensed milk. Found it in a drug store—baby-milk, they called it. I bought up their whole stock—six cans. My, but I got hungry for some sour-dough bread and moosesteak.

"Everything there seemed so pitifully small and trifling, it got on my nerves. There was nothing to do and nobody to help. I couldn't breathe. I got so lonesome that one night I lay awake, seeing things—this big country, the mountains praying to heaven, the stars winking through the spruce boughs, the north-lights waving and dancing. And hearing things—the fire crackling, the whispering winds, the creaking of the windlass, the water in the sluice-boxes, the dogs howling, the screaming sleds, the miners swapping yarns.

"In the morning I went to the bank and transferred fifteen thousand dollars to my sister and drew out the rest; and here I am. This is sure God's country to me. I'll never leave the North again.

"I got a good outfit of grub in Seattle, and for the past two months have been packing it across the mountains to Lake Bennett. I built me a nice boat big enough to carry it. I am all ready to start down the river; but came here to-day in hope of finding a partner—somebody who will work his passage to Dawson. Do you know of anyone?"

"Indeed I do," exulted the Parson. "I'll have a great proposition to make you, Sandy, soon."

"The little Doctor is a queer duck," said Walters aside to Scotty; "he's a strange sort of Scotchman."

The person indicated was the one incongruous and inharmonious member of the group of eleven so suddenly and strangely gathered together. He seemed to prefer solitude, and was curiously out of place as he sat apart, with set, unsmiling face, staring into the fire with coal-black eyes that had a gleam as of insanity in them. Jet-black hair and whiskers, a shapeless body set on short bowlegs, his head hardly reached to the Parson's shoulders. This was the "missionary physician" hastily selected to accompany and assist the Parson, and, as the Mission Board put it, "to take care of him." Though a Scotchman, born in Glasgow and bearing the Scotch name of McGowan, he had none of the Scotch dourness, and was the most helpless man in the North.

"Yon gowk a Scot?" sneered Scotty. "I'll not believe it. Look at the black hair and face of him. An' did you ever know a Scot who couldn't make a fire, or cook a bannock, or chop a tree, or pitch a tent, or make a bed of hemlock on the ground?"

"But he talks Gaelic with you," argued Walters.

"An' what does that signify? The Colonel's lady talks German, but does that make her Dutch? The wee mon is perhaps from Spanish forbears who strayed into the Lord's fold of Scotland; but I'll never own him for a true Scot."

"What tickles me," said the young lawyer, "is that the wise missionary society sent the little fellow to Alaska to 'take care of' the Dominie. I've seen the same thought flash through the Parson's face when he was making camp, pitching the tent, leveling the ground, getting wood and cooking supper, all at the

same time—he would look quizzically down upon the little Doctor, who, wrapped to his feet in his big overcoat, was looking helplessly on. The Parson has to tend the little cuss like a baby. It is like sending a poodle into Alpine snows to take care of a St. Bernard."

"And the bramble said unto the trees of the forest, 'Come and take refuge in my shade,'" and Scotty gave an irresistible imitation of the bow-legged little Doctor trying to spread his arms over the Parson.

Now the young lawyer's face lit up as by the flash of a searchlight, and before the others followed his gaze they knew that Viva was returning.

"Mon! Here's your St. Bernard!" ejaculated Scotty.

"A symphony in white and gold!" exclaimed the Colonel.

For the girl, in the brief time she had spent in the hotel-tent where their personal baggage was stored, had yielded to a delicate feminine instinct and arranged her costume to match her great dog—white felt cowboy hat with gold band, white flannel shirtwaist with gold four-in-hand tie, short khaki skirt and high laced tan boots.

The yellow and white St. Bernard mastiff, the largest of his kind, stood as high as her waist, and the two thoroughbreds were a picture to delight a sportsman's eye as they moved rhythmically into the camp circle, the girl's arm over the massive neck of the dog, while he consciously accommodated his steps to hers, and surveyed the group of friends with an air of mingled dignity and benevolence.

"This is Brutus," Viva introduced. "Do your manners, sir—ladies first," and the dog made the rounds, standing upright on his haunches before each, gravely presenting his paw and acknowledging their characteristic greetings with thunderous barks.

"I have one just like him at Dyea," Long Sandy whispered to the Parson, "and his name's Cassius."

IV

THE CONSTITUTION

"NOW we're all here," began the Parson to the assembled group, "and all bound for the Klondike. From what I've seen of this trail and what I have heard of the Chilcoot, it seems as if we are up against about as tough a proposition as ever men tackled. I doubt if the trails of '49 to California were really harder. The White Pass is blockaded, and will hardly be opened again before the snow. We'll have to go by the Chilcoot. Are we all going through this fall?"

"How much is it going to cost us to get our goods to Lake Bennett?" asked the Colonel.

"We-ell," hesitated Long Sandy, to whom all eyes were turned, "you'll have to pay now close on to four bits a pound—maybe more. You see, time's short. It's snowing on The Summit already. You've got to pack your goods thirty miles, whipsaw your lumber, make your boats and navigate six hundred miles of lakes and river to Dawson. You've only a little over a month to do that in. Ice will be floating in the Yukon by October first. The packers on the Chilcoot are striking every day for higher rates. The trail is getting worse—muddy, slippery, slushy, dangerous. It's lucky for me I began to pack two months ago."

The Colonel had been rapidly figuring with a pencil.

"That settles the matter for us, my dear," he said to his wife. "We haven't money enough. We'll have to winter here."

He spoke calmly; but his face had gone white. Mrs. De Long hugged his arm, her eyes wet.

"Oh, Jack," she sobbed, "it's too hard for you to give it up. It means so much for you to get in this fall. It is my fault that you are so late. I would come along. Let's take our chance and go on. We can leave all my things except that one warbag of woolens. I'll carry that. And leave all the canned goods."

"No," he sighed; "I've seen this coming for several days. We'll build a cabin here, and I'll send for a press and start a newspaper. Then we'll send an outfit over the Pass in March, and you and I will go down the Yukon in the first break-up of the ice."

Long Sandy's sympathy overcame his bashfulness. "That will be best," he broke in. "The snow will be packed by March, and the trail much better. They will cut steps in the snow and make a stairway over The Summit. You'll have plenty of company. Not one-fifth of this great mob will get down to Dawson this fall. Thousands have quit now and have left their grub on the trail, or sold it for a fifth of what it cost, and are hiking back home. The return steamboats are crowded, many going in the steerage or working their passage as deck hands or stokers. Lots of men are preparing to build cabins and winter here or at Dyea. There'll be a far bigger stampede in the spring, and men will get to Dawson then. You would not be likely to get a claim anyhow this winter."

"All the rest of us, I take it, will try the Chilcoot right away," resumed the Parson. "The Colonel and his wife will keep a supply depot of news and other necessaries for us here at Skagway, and we'll get a cabin ready for them next spring.

"Now we are a congenial little company, providentially thrown together. Why shouldn't we keep together for mutual help and companionship? I don't mean always travel together or camp together. That would be impossible, as each will be getting his own outfit along as best he can. But we can keep up our fellowship."

"Good scheme!" shouted Schofield. "Let's form a lodge. Call it 'The Strenuous Mushers.'"

"'The Jolly Mountaineers,'" suggested Viva.

"'The Mountain Go-its,'" ventured Walters.

"Walter," said the Parson severely, "another atrocity like that will force us to expel you. I didn't mean anything so formal or so cumbersome as a lodge. But here we are in the midst of what Sandy well calls a mob. The people are distracted and bewildered. They are like men lost in the woods. They don't know what to do next. They are out of function, like a dislocated shoulder."

"Gray squirrels in burrows, and rabbits up trees," prompted Viva.

"Exactly," continued the Parson, "they are out of place. I don't agree with the Colonel that these men are worse than the average, or that they are unmasked scoundrels. I believe that they will average well in intelligence and character with a like number of men anywhere. And those that win over the mountains

and down to the Klondike will be much stronger and braver than the average. We are watching God's process of selecting and training a strong race.

" It is something like this country—crude and newly glaciated. Up the river there are small glaciers, the remains of a tremendous plowshare of hard ice that once drove down here, scooped out the valley, shaped these mountains, dredged out Lynn Canal, made this part of the world after God's own plan. I've had some great days in this archipelago watching these mighty ice tools at work. Relentless, pitiless forces—they are but part of the ' All things that work together for good.'

" And we'll have some great days up North here watching the process of race shaping. This new experience, so hard and terrible to the most of this army, is going to be worth all it costs. Many of these poor fellows will be drawn under and ground to pieces, like the moraine matter of a glacier. But it will ultimately be the making of those that have it in them to be real men."

" I am still skeptical," said the Colonel, tossing his white mane like a war-horse. " There's a great lot of mighty poor material here. Look over yondeh "—indicating a tent from the pole of which a red handkerchief was fluttering; " and yondeh "—pointing to a saloon tent out of which a drunken man was staggering; " and there "—waving his hand toward a group who were watching four men gambling, with piles of gold and silver coin heaped up on the box between them. " And the brutal horse drivers this morning."

"But," protested the Parson, "the Southerner was a real gentleman; he had only lost his temper. How quickly his genuine manhood responded to Miss Viva's rebuke."

"Oh, anybody would be compelled to act the gentleman before a presence like hers," and the Colonel bent his stately head to the golden one of the girl.

"I saw a funny thing at Lake Linderman yesterday," said Schofield. "Two old farmers from Kansas—lifelong friends and neighbors evidently—who had bought their outfit together, packed it over the mountains, whipsawed the lumber and made a boat—these old friends quarreled over the cooking. They got so hot they refused to travel further together, and proceeded to divide their stuff piece about in separate piles—even counting the candles and cutting in two the odd one. When it came to the tent they made short work of that—simply cut the ridge rope in the middle and split the tent into two useless halves. The stove they couldn't divide, so one of them smashed it with a hammer. Then the boat which they had worked so long and hard to build—those old idiots glared at it and each other, and then, without a word, each took a handle of the crosscut saw and they sawed that boat in two, and each began to board up his end as best he could."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Viva, "won't they have a sweet time rowing those half boats down the river? I see them spinning like tops in the rapids. They'll never get to Dawson in the world."

"I helped to save a pair of quarreling partners on the White Pass from a worse fool trick than that,"

grinned Walters. "When they fell out the trail had killed all their horses but one, and they couldn't agree about the ownership of that one. The more they jawed the madder they grew, until one of them jumped for an ax and swung it to chop the horse in two. Then some of us interfered and led the poor animal away."

"The auld de'il's on the trail," said Scotty.

"Well, let's combine to drive him off," cried the Parson. "We'll demonstrate the fact that men and women can keep happy and sweet and unselfish even in the Klondike Stampede. Our members will be loyal to each other and to the law of human kindness. We'll cure these men gone temporarily insane from the dazzle of the gold and bring them to themselves. What do you say? What shall we call ourselves?"

"THE KLONDIKE CLAN," said Scotty; "and our tartan shall be white and gold"—with a glance at Viva and Brutus and at the yellow mackinaws of himself and Sandy.

"Good! and Scotty shall be the Highland Chief and Schofield the Scribe."

"Yes," shouted Walters, "and Mrs. De Long the Bard to 'skirl the pipes,' and Miss Carroll the Lady of the Lake, or Chief Canoeist."

"And Long Sandy the Chief Pathfinder," added the Parson. "The election is unanimous, and"—as those named began to protest—"the penalty of attempting to decline an office or shirk its duties is that such recreant shall be compelled to mount this stump and make a speech of acceptance. Mr. Scribe, record the names of the officers."

When the hubbub of laughter and applause had subsided he added, with a note of earnestness in his voice: "Friends, this is not all sport. It means a good deal to me, and the Klondike Clan may be made to mean a good deal to the weary pilgrims on the Klondike Trail.

"Now I propose that the constitution of our order be simply a set of rules suggested by each of the charter members and which we will make some attempt to live up to. Scotty, it's up to the Chief to begin."

Just then a passing mule driver shouted at his animals the vulgar epithet so universally and absurdly applied to things animate and inanimate. The word rang out above all other sounds of the camp, and Scotty instantly followed with his ready quotation from Scripture—"If thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth."

"In other words, be careful of your language," approved the Parson. "Now, Pathfinder?"

Long Sandy hesitated, blushed and leaned over to whisper in the Parson's ear.

"You've gone straight to the heart of the matter, as usual, old friend," the Parson cried, his face lighting up. Then to the circle: "Sandy says, 'Go the second mile.' It is the deepest principle of the Sermon on the Mount. 'Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him two.' Translated into the language of the trail it is *Do what you don't have to do and don't want to do for the sake of the other fellow.* Mr. Scribe, write that second mile as the first article of the constitution.

"I don't want to make this appear as a religious organization—it isn't that in any sense—but it has always been difficult to keep Bible language and imagery out of the work of any social order. I thought of this for my article: 'Bear one another's burdens.' Here we would put it—Give the other fellow a lift with his pack. Now, ladies?"

"Keep clean," was Mrs. Randall's suggestion.

"Hardest trick of all to do on this trail," Scotty commented with a knowing wink.

Mrs. De Long was poetic: "Keep in tune with the music of the mountains." She was applauded.

"Share your last bannock with a stranger," said Mrs. Schofield.

Viva's contribution was characteristic: "Don't be a quitter."

The Colonel prefaced his with a little speech. "It strikes me," he said, "that the constitution so far is too altruistic. Every man has his own rights to observe. He mustn't be unjust to himself in his care for his neighbor. The 'other cheek' rule is out of place in a stampede like this. My rule may sound truculent, but I believe it is just: Give every man exactly what is coming to him."

"I agree with the Colonel," assented the reporter, "and my rule regards the rights both of self and of others: Keep your place in the procession."

The young lawyer, under pretense of patting Brutus, had established himself close to the dog's mistress, who responded with frank friendliness. When it came his turn his eyes rested an instant on the hundreds of eager men threading the crooked paths, and

he said: "Play the game according to the rules, joyously and to the finish."

There was a pause. The little Doctor still sat apart from the others on his warbag, glum and silent, staring at the smoking ashes. The Parson spoke to him: "It's your turn, Doctor."

He started and his eyes sought those of the Colonel and questioned them. He had the look of a hunted animal. Only Scotty noticed the almost imperceptible shake of the head with which the Colonel answered him. His eyes dropped and he stared again at the ashes.

"He hasn't qualified," whispered Scotty to the Parson. "Put him on probation a while."

"Let Brutus join," pleaded Viva. "His motto is: 'Be loyal to your friends, and faithful to every trust.'"

"Read the articles, Mr. Scribe," commanded the Parson.

When this was done and the names of all except the Doctor subscribed the Parson said: "We need no forms or regulations. We'll get together when we can. The Chief will call us, and Schofield will keep us posted as to each other's movements. New members can be admitted by unanimous consent of all the members it is possible to consult, and on condition of their subscribing to the articles and each adding one of his own. Let us sing 'Annie Laurie.'"

The music that arose was remarkably good. All of the Clan could sing, and all knew the sweet old song. The spell of it halted the hurrying groups on the crooked paths. Voices began to join in. A re-

markably sweet tenor and a rolling bass swelled louder as a group of College Boys came up and halted just outside. The lovely melody came as refreshing balm to the weary and distracted camp; and when it was through many still waited for more.

But all this had been too solemn for Walters. He raised a shout: "Let us inaugurate our new chief. Let us make him dance the 'Highland Fling'; " and he and Schofield seized the fleeing Scotty and marched him to the level place before the fire, while the Colonel and the ladies cleared the ground.

"An' forbye ye're thinkin' I canna," Scotty bluffed when he found escape impossible. "Gin yon bonnie lassie will dance wi' me, I'll e'en fling a foot for ye."

"Sure I will," assented the girl, doffing her hat.

Mrs. De Long, in addition to her other musical gifts, possessed remarkable whistling powers, and the wild, lilting Scotch air rang shrill and loud. The grizzled Scotch-Irishman, with his comical, twisted face, and the lithe young girl dashed madly into the dance, going through the intricate steps perfectly, feet twinkling, arms tossing, bodies swaying; Scotty's Highland yell and Viva's sweet shrill call answering one another, the music and the dancing waxing faster and wilder amid the plaudits of the increasing circle of spectators.

"Sandy," said the Parson in his ear, "I have something important to say to you," and he led the way around the circle to his tent.

V

LONG SANDY AND THE GIRL

"READ this first," the Parson said, placing Mrs. Randall's letter of introduction in Sandy's hand. The old miner adjusted his glasses, read the letter, then slowly read it again.

"They sure are wonderful women," he said at last. "They are like the dream of my young days."

"Yes, they are that. But, capable as they are, they have no knowledge of what is before them. Here they are—two women, strangers to the country and with no friends except those they have picked up today. They are bound for the Klondike on this mission of love. They must go in this fall. The girl must find her father.

"I imagine from what the letter says that they are not very flush of money. The girl has been assistant manager of her father's ranch—she would take that place naturally. She is probably more capable than he.

"She has been the buyer of their outfit for this trip. I saw their shipping manifest. They must have nearly three tons of provisions. Their goods are well selected—for Montana, but not for Alaska: canned tomatoes, canned corn, canned fruits, jars of jam and jelly; syrup, pickles, catsup, milk—water, Sandy, water! Three thousand pounds or more of water! And it will

cost close to a dollar a pound to get that water to Dawson.

" Now, Viva and her aunt don't realize this yet. But we, who have shaved down our outfits to the most condensed and lightest form—to bacon, beans and flour—we know it. And we know that it is going to take a mighty struggle, at that, to get half enough grub into the Klondike to keep us alive this winter.

" I am going to have my hands full to get in that helpless little Doctor and our joint outfit. We are short of time and short of money. I must get through. Think of those homesick thousands in there without the Gospel—without anybody to care for them—body, mind or soul. It is simply out of the question. I'm going through if I have to leave everything behind.

" Scotty and Walters are both short of funds. They'll have to pack their outfits over the mountains on their own backs, and make their own boat. Schofield and his wife are tenderfeet—new to this experience. He gets only enough from his paper in New York to pay his expenses, and he has to account for everything. Sandy, old friend, there is nobody in all this great camp to take Mrs. Randall and Miss Viva to Dawson on their sacred quest but yourself. The Good Lord has honored you. He has placed two of His noblest creatures in your hands and commissioned you to take them to Dawson. Will you do it?"

Long Sandy had been listening with growing dismay. Big drops of sweat gathered on his forehead. His knees shook.

" Why—why, Parson," he stammered. " It's—you're foolish! A knotty old stick from the woods, like

me! Look at the breaks I've made already. Why, I haven't spoken to ladies like that since your wife was so good to me twenty years ago. I'm not fit to brush their shoes. I'd be as dumb as an oyster in their presence, and as awkward as a porcupine. I couldn't open my mouth. They'd be ashamed of me."

"Oh, hush, Sandy!" broke in the Parson, shaking him by the shoulder. "You're in a blue funk about nothing. Why, man, you're not going to sit in a drawing-room, dressed in a swallow-tailed coat, and entertain them. You're going mushing and camping with them. Don't think of them as high-toned society ladies or superior beings or anything like that. They are comrades of the trail—nothing more. You'll find that little girl a more experienced and resourceful camper than any young man you ever took into the woods."

"But I—I—I'm so unfit—such an old dunder-headed savage."

"There you go again, you self-centered old egotist—thinking only of yourself and your behavior. One would think, the way you talk, that you are the most selfish old curmudgeon in the world, whereas I know you to be the most unselfish. Stop brooding over your awkwardness and your possible 'breaks' and go to work. Say to yourself 'Here's a child who has got to get into Dawson to find her father, and I'm the only man in the world to handle that proposition; and I'm going to put it through.' Apply your own rule, man—go the second mile."

"Do—do you think I could?" faltered the poor old backwoodsman.

"Think? I know it. And you're going to bless me all your days because I made you do it. Why, the Lord has brought you in your old age what you have been hungering for all your life—somebody to love and work for. You are old enough to be the woman's father and the girl's grandfather. Think of them as your daughter and granddaughter and rejoice that at last you have found them.

"Now I'll tell you my plan. You'll have to spend three or four days here going over their big outfit, weeding it out and getting the necessary part of it to Dyea. I'll go over there to-morrow with our outfit. There's a band of Chilcat and Chilcoot Indians there, packing outfits over the Pass to Lake Bennett. They all know me and I have some influence over them; and they all know you, and we can both talk to them in their own language. I'll try to corral as many as possible for you and get them to pack for you and you only until you are through. You'll have to pay them a little more than the current price in order to secure them. They are faithful and will carry the goods clear through without asking any pay until they get to Bennett. I'll get along with white packers for our outfit. Now, Sandy, you're elected. You sit right here till I find the ladies."

"All—all right, Parson. But, say!"—as the Parson was about to leave the tent—"if—if they haven't money enough to pay for their packing, don't—don't let them know it."

"You old fraud!" grinned the Parson. "You want me to help you deceive these women into thinking they are paying for packing their goods to Bennett

while you will be paying the bulk of the expenses out of your own pocket. Very well; I'll aid and abet your nefarious scheme. Only I don't think you'll hoodwink Viva very long. Those bright eyes of hers will see further into a business proposition than you think." And he departed on his errand, well pleased with his old friend and with himself.

He found the girl, evidently the victor in the contest, laughing and rosy, seated on a throne improvised from half a dozen boxes. Scotty was prone on the ground, held there by the Colonel, while Schofield and Walters, with mock solicitude, under pretense of reviving him, were sousing him with water. Mrs. De Long was drinking deep draughts of cold water, "to wet the pipes," as she said.

The Parson had some difficulty in detaching the girl from the company of college boys and other young men who were crowding in, eager for an introduction. He led her and her aunt aside.

"Old Sandy will help you over the Pass and down the river to Dawson," he told them. "He's waiting for you now in my tent yonder. A word about him before you go to see him. He's the most timid and distrustful man in the world—and the bravest and most efficient. He would meet a grizzly, bare-handed and alone, without a tremor, but the thought of being in a room alone with a lady scares him to death. He is trembling now, through every inch of his six-feet-six, at the thought of meeting you. He has always been that way.

"But if you can establish between you relations of simple comradeship—if he can once forget his bash-

fulness and his fear of 'making breaks,' why, he'll give his whole life to you; he'll work and fight for you and love you as no other man can. And if you can love him a little in return, 'Then wilderness were paradise enow' for my dear old friend."

"Why, I love him already," cried Viva, as they moved toward the tent. "I think he's splendid. He's my Uncle Sandy."

Then she stopped as a thought struck her. "He's a hunter?"

"The best in the Northwest."

"Wait a minute."

She darted into the Colonel's tent where she had left her rifle and emerged with it in its embossed leather case.

Long Sandy had hardly seen the women during the dinner and the following scenes. His eyes had been cast down to the ground in an agony of bashfulness. He was now sitting in misery and fear, trying to rehearse in his mind a deprecatory speech of greeting that wouldn't have a "break" in it, when suddenly the tent flap opened and a radiant vision in white and gold appeared and a voice like the cheery chirp of a bird cried "Uncle Sandy, what do you think of my rifle?" and a beautiful repeater of latest pattern was laid in his hands.

"I won that in a contest in Helena last fall. Do you think it's all right for Alaska game?"

Gone in a flash were the fearsome superior beings of the female sex, critical and fastidious, whom his fears had conjured up; and in their place were this comely, homelike, matter-of-fact person of ample form

and pleasant smile—and this bright little hunter-comrade of steady nerve and keen eye.

He examined the elegant rifle with delight; its silver mountings, its artistic etchings and engravings, its shapely stock and octagonal barrel; its Lyman sight and telescope attachment. He pushed down the lever and peeped through the flawless bore blazing with white light; he balanced it and drew a bead.

"It's all right for caribou and sheep," he said at last, "but rather light for moose and silver-tip."

"Oh," broke in Viva, "you'll take me on a caribou hunt this fall yet, won't you? And I'm crazy to get one of your white Alaska sheep. I got a dandy big-horn on the Kootenai Range last fall, but I want an Ovis dalli."

"I know a place up the Klondike River," the old hunter began, "where the caribou——"

"Now come to earth, you two," broke in the voice of the Parson, "and get down to business. You are a long way from the caribou. Mrs. Randall, have you your shipping bill? Sandy will have to look it over and locate your stuff and see about getting it to Dyea."

"Oh, Viva is the business head of our family and does all the buying. I'm just the cook," said Mrs. Randall apologetically.

"But such a cook!" exclaimed the girl. "Uncle Sandy, just you wait. You'll think Malamute dog is spring lamb when Auntie May cooks it."

"Here are the manifests," producing them from the pretty bead-worked Sioux hunting bag which she had slung on her shoulder when she got her rifle. "I'm afraid I bought too much canned stuff. There was

nobody to consult except a lot of tenderfeet, and I thought Daddy might be hard up for something nice and appetizing."

"How much money have you?" queried the Parson.

"I've just a thousand dollars left," replied the girl. "Will that be enough to take our outfit to Dawson, Uncle Sandy?"

The old miner had never consciously told a lie in all his life, but he came very close to it now. "I think we can make it do," he said.

"The blessed old prevaricator!" thought the Parson. "A thousand dollars to take in six thousand pounds at the cost of not less than fifty cents a pound to Bennett, and probably as much more the rest of the way! And he thinks he can make it do! Well, he will—by the help of his own money."

Aloud he said: "I'll have to be going now to look after my own outfit. I congratulate you on having found each other."

Deprived of his male supporter, Long Sandy's embarrassment surged back upon him. He began to stammer and to recall the speech of apology he had been rehearsing.

"I—I'm afraid you—you'll find me a—terrible boor. You've been used to cultivated society, and now to—to have nobody but an—an old Indian! That's what I am—a wild man of the woods. I'm not—not fit company for such as you. I——"

A strong little hand closed his mouth and a firm arm encircled his neck and nearly pulled him over. "You stop!" commanded the voice. "I won't have it. You're traducing my Uncle Sandy! Why,

you're the finest gentleman in Alaska. We both fell in love with you at first sight, didn't we, Auntie May?" And with a deft motion she slid the old man's arm across her shoulders and, nestling within it, rubbed her cheek against his hand and kissed the horny palm.

"I'd rather have you around than a whole regiment of those young greenhorns out there. You're a man!"

The old backwoodsman's defenses were all swept away. His diffidence fell away from him as a garment. His surrender was unconditional and for all time.

"Lassie," he said—"my Lassie!—that's what I'm going to call you—if—if you'll do that again to me once in a while I—I'll not mind whatever else may happen to me."

As the Parson got back to the camp-fire he observed a commotion on the trail in front of it. A slightly built man, rather under medium size, dark complexion and with coal-black eyes, hair and beard, was walking briskly up the trail; and behind him, but keeping a respectful distance, as if they were subjects of a prince, marched eight or ten of as tough-looking citizens as could be selected from the outlaws of half a dozen States. The leader paused a moment opposite our friends, appraised the men, women and outfits with keen glances, and passed on.

"Do you know who that is?" asked Schofield, when the man and his followers had gone beyond earshot.

"Aye," answered Scotty; "all Colorado knows him—and no good of him."

"That," said the reporter, "is one of Denver's most illustrious citizens. That is the famous Soapy Smith

—tinhorn gambler, confidence man and general exploiter of the unwary. He worked the three-card monte game on the train across the continent and on the boat from Seattle up the coast; and here he is with his henchmen to work the miners—not the mines. He is running two or three stands of the ancient shell-game on the various trails and relieving a lot of these tenderfeet of their surplus cash."

"Yes," assented the Parson, "the gang is running one of the sure-thing shell games, wide open, up the trail here, less than a mile from this spot. I saw it this morning. There are seven or eight cappers or stool-pigeons, dressed as miners, who march with the procession with their packs, lead unsuspecting greenhorns up to the stump on which the shells are manipulated, put down their money and walk off with fifty or a hundred dollars, while the greenhorns look on and think they can do the same thing. The decoys dodge into the bushes a little farther on, double back to strike the line on this side again, and go up to the game with another bunch of victims.

"I saw men coming away with the look of dazed despair on their faces that the fool lamb always has when he has been fleeced. I saw a chubby, rosy-cheeked boy six feet in height sitting on a stump, weeping big tears and wiping them with the back of his hand. I made him tell me his story. He is a farmer's boy, staked by his old father, who put another mortgage on the already overburdened farm to raise the money. Now the boy has lost all the money he had left to that gang of thieves, and must sell his goods for a fifth of what they cost him to raise enough

to take him back home. There is a nice farmer's daughter in the case, too."

"And I'll bet you were soft enough to give him a chunk of your money to help him out," said Walters.

"No," answered the Parson gravely, "I don't know but I should have done so, the poor lad was so forlorn; but the Doctor here and I have put our money together, and I cannot give it away without consulting him. But isn't it astonishing that this old, threadbare swindle, which has been written up and exposed for a hundred years, should find victims at this intelligent close of the nineteenth century?"

The Parson was facing and talking to the reporter, who was jotting down the "story" to fill another sensational column of his paper. He did not see the pantomime acted behind him; how the little Doctor turned farther away from him with his dark face flushed, his eyes on the ground and his hands working nervously; how Mrs. De Long rose, started forward and opened her mouth to speak; how the Colonel rose hurriedly, crossed over to his wife, took her by the arm and walked her aside, both whispering earnestly. Walters and Mrs. Schofield were intent on the Parson's story and failed to note this byplay. The Parson's eyes were on the fire and his thoughts on the scenes of the trail. Only Scotty saw—and understood.

Mrs. De Long would probably have broken away from her husband and said her say had not an interruption occurred. A fine-looking elderly Indian, holding in one hand a bunch of silver bracelets carved with native figures and leading by the other a bright-

eyed little half-breed girl of six, came upon the group of campers, and, when he saw the Parson, stopped short with that sharp intaking of breath which is the Thlinget's exclamation of surprise and delight, his brown face wrinkling with smiles like the skin of a baked apple. Then he rushed up to the Parson with outstretched hand. *"Uh too yukeh! Uh Nuknate Ankow-klin!"* (My heart is happy! My big Preacher-Chief!)

"Why, Jack!" exclaimed the Parson. "I am very glad to see you again. Friends, this is one of my old tillicums and pupils—Chilcoot Jack, one of the best native jewelers on the coast," and he and the Indian engaged in a rapturous crossfire of mingled Thlinget, Chinook and English.

To cover his wife's agitation and divert the conversation from dangerous channels, the Colonel broke in with a laugh: "I have a good story on the Parson. When we were coming through Wrangle Narrows we stopped at a salmon cannery and village called Petersburg. A stalwart, heavy-faced Indian called Klawock Charley greeted the Parson very much as Jack has done. It appears that in the Parson's early missionary travels he found the Klawock tribe about the toughest bunch of natives in the Archipelago—witch-burners, hooch-makers and generally full of the devil. Charley was the worst of the lot. But lately some young natives, instructed by the Salvation Army, have gone preaching and singing to Klawock and the whole tribe has been noisily converted. The Parson said:

"'Charley, I'm very happy to hear that the Klawocks have become Christians.'

"'You betcher boots,' answered Charley. 'We all damn good now. We all love Jesus like hell!'"

In the midst of the laugh that followed the Parson turned to his partner: "Doctor, get your medicine case and come with Jack and me. His little grandchild is sick and some other natives also."

He turned at once and followed the Indian, and the little Doctor, as Walters put it, "calipered" after.

"Now, John," blazed the Colonel's wife, almost crying, "why did you shut me up? It is a perfect shame! He ought to know all about it and send the little wretch back to the States. I *will* tell him."

Then to the others: "What do you think we saw this morning? The Colonel and I were walking up the trail and passed that very shell-game, and there I saw the Doctor betting his money, which, from what the Parson has said, is partnership funds.

"I said 'Look, John; Dr. McGowan is losing his money. Make him stop.'

"The Colonel hurried up to the place, but before he could reach it I saw the Doctor lose two bills in succession; I think they were hundred dollar bills. It looked as though the crooks had him hypnotized.

"John took him by the collar. 'You little fool,' he said, 'don't you know you can't beat a sure-thing game? Come away from here.'

"The men who were running the game looked awfully black and cursed John for interfering, and I thought one of them was going to draw his pistol.

"The Doctor tried to pull away. 'I saw the little ball under the cup; I know where it is now,' he said; but John hauled him off.

" 'How much did you lose?' I asked him.

" At that he seemed to come to himself and began to cry: 'Too much, too much! I thought I could win!'

" Then he pled with the Colonel not to tell the Parson. 'He'll send me back and I'll be shamed before the Church.'

" The Colonel refused at first till the Doctor fairly got down on his knees to him. 'It will break my wife's heart,' he said. 'I'll tell him myself if you give me time.'

" So the Colonel gave in and promised not to tell. But I made no such promise, and the Parson ought to know."

" My promise is yours, my dear," said the Colonel.

" But not mine," cried Walters. " The Dominie must be made to realize just how matters stand. I happen to know they had barely enough to take them and their goods to Dawson, and now that the little misfit has probably lost three or four hundred dollars of it the Dominie will be in difficulty. That man will sit on his shoulders like an Old Man of the Sea, and he'll have to cook and care for him all winter and be in financial trouble besides. The Parson must not be made to suffer for another's foolishness. Let him take his half of the original sum and his half of the stuff and send the Doctor back to face the consequences of his crime."

Schofield and the ladies nodded assent, but the Colonel said, " No, a promise is a promise. I engaged to keep the matter from the Parson, and I demand that you, as my friends, respect my pledge. Never fear for the Parson; he'll get through all right. The Doctor

has promised to tell him the truth, and it would much better come from his own lips."

"Aye, man," said Scotty, plucking Walters's sleeve, "it's the rule o' the game. Keep mum. 'A talebearer revealeth secrets, but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.'"

And the young lawyer, reluctant and angry, consented.

VI

THE BEACH

THE cheery voice of the Parson broke in: "I found quite a number of old friends in the Indian camp at the foot of the mountain over there. They were so glad to see me that it made me happy all through. We have done some good to those poor people and, I hope, saved a life. The Doctor is still there with his medicines. Come now, this is our last evening together ere we 'mush on.' Let us go and see the sights of the beach."

"I must write this 'story,'" demurred the reporter. The Colonel, Scotty and Walters were ready, and the four went forth.

Doubling and turning at every yard the Parson led the way through the jumble of commodities, implements, horses, dogs and men—a scene of confusion the like of which was never seen before.

Dodging under the guy-rope of a large stable tent and veering to avoid the iron-shod hoofs of the mules the four come out now from the moss and stumps to the sand and pebbles of the upper beach. Here the piles of goods and the wagons, horses and tents are thicker, every available foot occupied, the wagon road turning every rod to avoid the obstructions newly placed.

The friends come suddenly upon a little tent pitched

squarely across the road; and at its door stands a slight slip of a girl, half clad in scarlet and shivering in the raw air, who, though it is yet daylight, signals, half ashamed and half shameless, to Walters. The large, brown eyes have an appealing, innocent look, and are swimming in unshed tears.

The girl cannot be more than fifteen years old, and, though having the unrounded form of immaturity, in features and complexion she is delicately pretty.

"You poor, foolish child!" exclaims the Parson, stopping abruptly. "Why, you're only a baby! Where's your mother?"

The girl, startled, glances at the Parson's pitying face and gesture, and a gleam of hope strikes across her face, making it beautiful. She makes a step forward, her hands thrown out in a gesture of appeal, and opens her lips as if to speak. But she catches sight of a stout, burly figure, surmounted by a heavy, sensual face, which is rapidly approaching, and sees his hand waving her into the tent. Terror extinguishes the light in her eyes and she slinks into the tent and pulls shut the flap.

The man halts suddenly when within a few feet of our party, and as his eye measures their proportions and bearing his truculent attitude changes to one of cowed sullenness and he dodges into the tent.

"Master and slave!" exclaims the Colonel. "Did you ever hear an incident of *ante-bellum* times in the South to match that in sheer brutality? We freed our black slaves, why shouldn't we free these white ones?"

"Well, shall I throw the brute into the bay?" It is Walters who speaks, and his hands twitch eagerly.

"No; come along," answers the Parson with a sigh. "You'd but make her condition worse without a chance of saving her. The 'mark of the beast' is on her. You would only start a useless row," and he turns to lead the way to the beach.

But at his first step he almost collides with a furious little figure that has leaped over a pile of sacks by the side of the trail and is rushing past him. "For shame!" shrills an indignant voice. "Can't you see the girl isn't tough? She has been kidnapped," and Viva hurries to the tent and tugs at the flap. It is held from the inside.

"Uncle Sandy!" she screams, and "Coming, Lassie!" a voice calls back, and the old miner comes hurrying up.

Walters has taken his place instantly by Viva's side while the others gather round her. Men come running in from all sides. She looks like the Angel of Wrath.

"Open the tent," she commands. There is no response from the inside but a suppressed shriek of pain.

Long Sandy does not wait a second. He and Scotty jump for the guy-ropes, while the Parson and the Colonel pull up tent pins. A rush, and the tent is swept clear away, disclosing a mussy interior, with a pitiful little red figure shaken by sobs crouching on the floor, and a big, fat hand gripping cruelly each scarlet shoulder.

The man struggles to his feet with an oath as his roof disappears, and his right hand seeks his hip. In one leap Walters is upon him, the pistol is wrenched from his grasp and he is sent whirling. Ere he re-

covers his equilibrium Old Sandy has him, the knotted fingers sinking into the fat neck, and he is shaken back and forth like a punchbag. Then he is faced toward the beach, a big voice roars above him " Now mush!" and a mighty push sends him down the trail. He doesn't stop. As he breaks through the ring of men his motion is accelerated by a big, hobnailed shoe swinging on a long leg and landing where it will do the most good. With a bawl he waddles down the road, hatless and coatlesss, developing surprising speed. A general laugh relieves the tension of the spectators.

When the grip on her shoulders is relaxed the girl on the floor raises her head and looks dazedly around. When her tyrant disappears she rises to her feet, her brown hair streaming down her back; and then, instinctively recognizing her deliverer, throws herself on the ground, her arms encircling Viva's feet. Reassured by lifting hands and gentle words the outlines of the pitiful story are faltered forth.

A schoolgirl in Seattle—her mother a seamstress—an errand with a bundle—a woman asks her to call at a downtown lodging house for a dress—a sweet drink tendered with a smile—oblivion—a fearful awakening at night in the stateroom of a throbbing steamer, and in the filthy claws of a beast—a week of terror and torture and shame—instruction with blows and pinching and threats of murder in what she is to do—the landing last night—and to-day——

Ere the tale is finished the girl's head is on Mrs. Randall's motherly bosom, and loving hands are stroking her hair. Her loose garment, slipping down, discloses terrible proof of her story in purple bruises

on arms and shoulders and welts on the tender back.

"Uncle Sandy," asks Viva, looking up with streaming eyes, "may I take her along?"

And the pioneer, without a falter at thought of additional expense and care, answers, "Sure, my Lassie."

As they are taking the sobbing girl to the tents the Parson steps up to Viva, hat in hand.

"I am in the dust at your feet, my dear child," he says. "You were right and I was wrong. Your pure instincts are far safer than all our reasoning. God bless you."

Before the buzzing ring of onlookers has scattered a heavy-laden wagon with broad tires, drawn by four mules, comes up the road. The driver pulls up when he sees the débris in the way—the prone tent, the mattress on the ground, the blankets and scattered clothing.

"Drive right on," yells a voice in the crowd; other voices join in, "Drive on; drive on." Sensing the situation the driver whips up his mules, and grinds tent, blankets and all into the muddy gravel.

The four resume their stroll down the sands, the thoughts of all on the lesson they have learned from this wonderful daughter of Montana, Walters boyishly exultant in the knowledge that he had stood by Viva "in the pinch."

"Just look at the boats," wheezes Scotty, pointing a knotted finger at the piles of lumber strewn along the beach as far as you can see. Some of the piles are scattered and the lumber mixed. "Hundreds of

knock-down boats, and each one the squanderings of a fool. Do they think they'll get one of these contraptions over the mountains?"

"Hold on!" laughs the Parson. "I'm one of your fools. But I will get some good out of my boat. Here it is," and he stops beside a finished boat of Puget Sound cedar, lying at the mouth of the little creek. "I set it up yesterday and shall take my goods to Dyea in it to-morrow."

"And what might that be, now?" asks Scotty, stopping by a queer combination of upright boiler, engine and flutter-wheel with claws on it, all mounted on sled runners. The contrivance is clumsy and heavy, weighing close to a ton.

An eager-faced little man in a shabby black suit steps from behind it and answers, "That, sir, is a steam motor-sled of my own invention. I fancy I have solved the problem of how to get our goods over the road and down the Yukon when it freezes over. This sled will do the work of half a dozen teams and haul a train of twenty sleds. And the wood to feed it is to be had everywhere along the way."

"Man, man, but you're a wonder!" says Scotty, jerking off his cap and eyeing the little man with admiration. "I doff my hat to the king of all the fools. What do you think the trails and passes are? French boulevards? Kings' highways? And do ye imagine the Yukon freezes smooth like a mill pond? How'll ye get the lumbering go-devil over the broken rocks and up the steep mountains? I'll tell ye what I'll do with ye. Here's a fifty-dollar bill that says ye can't

take that thing by its own steam up to the trees yonder. Do ye call me?"

Muttering something about being out of money and no snow on the ground, the little man leaves the grinning four, carrying himself with an air as of genius unappreciated. The Parson is to see the motor-sled gathering rust on the same spot when he comes through Skagway years hence.

"These machines seem to me almost as impracticable as the steam sled," remarks the Colonel, as they pass along by patent rockers, boilers, windlasses and even a steam dredge. "I imagine they will all stay on the beach in company with it. What a deal of gray brain matter and of hard cash have been uselessly expended by the inventors and promoters on this rubbish. You are right, Scotty; this is a great aggregation of fools."

"There you go again with your harsh judgment, Colonel," says the Parson. "They are not fools. They are just ordinary, level-headed men taken out of their proper spheres and away from their wonted employments into untried experiences. A word from an experienced man is all that is necessary to set them right."

"Well! Look there!" exclaims the Parson as he points to a spot out on the sand beach, toward the bay. Here the sun and wind have dried the level sand in a few hours, and a little company of men, evidently partners, lured by the promising site, are packing goods there from a lighter and erecting tents for themselves and their horses and effects.

"My friends," says the Parson, hurrying down to

them, " don't you know the tide will cover this spot in four or five hours? The moon is full and there will be six feet of salt water over all this flat by eleven o'clock. You'll have to take your stuff clear up beyond that first row of tents, for some of them are too far down. The tide is on the turn now and it will come in with a rush. It will catch you if you don't hurry."

" Say, old smarty, what's yer graft?" jeers a fine-looking young fellow who is busy planting a tent pole. " Got an express wagon and want ten prices for moving our stuff?"

" No," says the Parson earnestly, " I have no graft and no wagon; but I am experienced in these tides and know what I am talking about. I saw the water up by those tents this morning, and it will be higher to-night because it will be full tide. I want to save you from a ducking, that's all."

" Work away, boys," calls a middle-aged man, who seems to be the leader, as he shoulders roughly by our friends. " I guess somebody else besides the moon and tide is ' full.' Why, that water can't come anywhere near us. It's a quarter of a mile away and would have to rise fifteen feet to reach us. The old duffer has been having too much and is seeing double, or else he has squatter's right to a little square of ground somewhere and wants to get a hundred dollars for it," and the men resume their work with a derisive laugh.

" How about ' the simple word of experience being sufficient to set men right,' Parson?" shouts the Colonel, clapping his discomfited friend on the back

as they turn away. " I'm coming down to-night to see the fun when the tide comes up. It will serve them right."

" And I am coming with wagons and lanterns," says the Parson, " to save these men from the consequences of their folly. There are a thousand dollars' worth of goods there, probably all they have in the world. It would be a pity to have them ruined."

" Now, Dominie, let them get what's coming to them," protests Walters, resentful of the indignity offered his beloved mentor. " You did your duty by those brutes faithfully, and they insulted you for it. Let them learn their lesson from the old schoolmaster. They deserve nothing more."

" Ah, my boy, my boy," says the Parson in loving reproof. " You ' know not what spirit you are of.' It is not what men deserve that should determine our actions toward them, but what they need. I am coming down to-night to help these men, and you are coming with me. They will learn wisdom yet. Let us go the second mile."

" Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him," quotes Scotty, and the Colonel nods approval.

" Tut, tut, boys! Don't feed a grudge on such sorry stuff as this. We'll all come here to-night as a relief party and ' heap coals of fire.' We'll turn the jeers of these men into thanks."

And they did as the Parson said.

VII

SANDY'S FAMILY

THEY were a very consequential little Viva and a very unconsequential little Kitty who came down to the beach the next morning to see their friends off and prepare for their own departure to Dyea. Viva had formally adopted Kitty, and the motherly solicitude of the girl of nineteen for the girl of fifteen was refreshing to see. The two were almost exactly of the same height, weight and general build; and the corduroy hunting suits and high laced boots which both wore, although made for the elder, fitted the younger with equal neatness.

But there the resemblance ended. Golden hair and hazel eyes for the elder—brown hair and brown eyes for the younger. But far deeper and broader than any difference of feature or color was this—one was an outdoor girl, the other an indoor girl; one a mountain flower, wind-blown and sweet, the other a blossom reared with what care could be given it, but in the poor soil and scant sunshine of the small back yard of a city tenement. And so the walk, the swing, the independent strength and grace of the girl who could shoot and ride and paddle a canoe and rope a steer made even the striking beauty of the child from the city seem in comparison a meager and feeble thing.

They were dressed alike, but their costume differed in one startling respect: Viva wore a leather belt, and hanging from it was a holster from which peeped the butt of a handsomely mounted but very serviceable revolver "ready for business." The doughty little damsel had openly announced her determination to shoot a certain "fat beast" on sight; and this expressed purpose had been received with applause by a little circle of friends of hers and widely heralded about the camp, together with wonderful stories of her deadly prowess with firearms. It is hardly necessary to add that neither she nor any of her friends in the Northwest ever caught sight again of the said "fat beast."

However, a rumor, starting in Skagway soon afterward, and, unlike the proverbial stone, gathering moss as it rolled, hinted of a terrified stowaway of superfluous adiposity discovered in the hold of a steamboat which sailed from Skagway the night after the incidents above described; of his hatless, coatless and generally disheveled appearance, and how he eagerly paid more than the price of a passage to Seattle on condition that he should remain unseen by the other passengers.

Rumor also spoke of a tarpaulin-covered outfit of food and clothing lying unclaimed on the beach for a week or two and then disappearing at night, presumably taken by one of the small "merchants" dealing in discarded and forsaken outfits, to be sold at some "sacrifice sale" during the winter.

Never did shadow follow more closely and persistently a moving object than Kitty followed Viva.

In that fateful ten minutes yesterday of rapidly alternating shame and hope and terror and torture and salvation every voice had been distinctly audible to the poor child in the tent. And the one fact which was stamped into her consciousness amid all the confused impressions of the moment was that when all others were abandoning her to her horrible fate the angel of mercy who flew to her deliverance was this golden-haired young lady.

And when her rescue was so surprisingly accomplished it was Viva's encircling arm that half led, half carried her to the tent which Long Sandy had been setting up near the Parson's, and the hands of Viva and her aunt that undressed her and, with soft words of pity and sympathy, bathed her bruised body and stroked away the nervous tension of her muscles. And after an hour of loving ministration had brought some degree of ease to her tortured body and of calmness to her troubled mind it was Viva who procured paper and pen and supported her while she wrote a letter to her distracted mother, omitting the too harassing details, but telling of her forcible abduction, of her rescue and of her determination to "follow Miss Carroll wherever she goes."

And when Mrs. Randall, assisted by Mrs. De Long and Mrs. Schofield, had prepared another camp-fire feast for the whole Clan and served it, after night had fallen, in the light of the blazing logs, it was this same guardian angel who arrayed the trembling Kitty in a soft kimono and led her out to be the guest of honor at the supper. And, most wonder-compelling of all, when exhaustion claimed her to have this bright little

savior of hers prepare a bed of soft robes and blankets, and after both young girls had knelt in prayers of thankfulness to the loving Savior who had inspired this deed of salvation, to have Viva lie down with her and take her, so lately an outcast, despised and lost, into sisterly arms until morning!—ah, surely a deep purpose of lifelong service and loyal devotion were in the whisper of the poor child as, her arms tightening about Viva's neck, she breathed, " Whither thou goest I will go."

But what neither of the girls knew was the surprising, even fiery, way in which the gentle and placid Mrs. Randall stood up for both of them.

The story of the rescue had been noised about, and the great camp buzzed with it. A number of men came from nearby outfits to express their admiration of Viva's deed, and to catch a glimpse of the heroine and her protégée. The Southerner of the pack-train and the five college boys came to get acquainted and, if possible, to have a word with Viva.

Among others came a severely religious man who had been at the Parson's Sunday services. After the two girls had retired, leaving the others sitting around the fire, he led the talk to the " blatant wickedness " of the camp. He called it a Sodom, and expressed the opinion that if an angel were to canvass the town to see if there were in it the requisite ten righteous persons necessary to save it from destruction they could not be found. When the Parson jocularly remarked that this was rather hard upon the fifteen or twenty persons present, he suddenly turned to Mrs. Randall.

" Madam," he said, " do you not think it rather

dangerous to allow your niece to take up with a girl of that character?"

"What character?" asked the lady.

"Why, bad character, of course."

"What reason have you to think that Kitty is a girl of bad character?" Mrs. Randall was perceptibly stiffening.

The good man was astonished. "Isn't she ruined, body and soul—a fallen woman? And wasn't she, only to-day, plying her nefarious calling on the trail in this camp? And to-night you allow her to occupy the same bed with your niece!"

Mrs. Randall rose to her feet, and the Parson and Old Sandy also stood up.

"Well," she inquired—and her calm was deadly—"what would you advise me to do with little Kitty?"

"Why, send her where she belongs," he said roughly, "and don't let her besmirch your niece. 'Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone.'"

"Sir"—Mrs. Randall's eyes were blazing now—"I'll take my chance with little Kitty in the Day of Judgment rather than with you or any one else who condemns her. She is a sweet child, well brought up by a good, hard-working mother. Her character is as good as yours or mine, and she is probably far more innocent of evil. What that brute was able to do to her has no more affected her character than the soul of your little child would be affected should a ruffian toss its body into a dirty pool. If you were consistent you would let your baby drown because its clothes and skin were stained.

"Kitty has received no stain that will not come off.

My niece in rescuing her did a natural and Christly thing; and I imagine that Kitty's dependence and love and loyalty will do Viva as much good as my niece has done or can do for her. Good night," and the good lady stalked to her tent, quivering with indignation.

The Parson bowed and thanked her as she passed, and his widowed heart was stirred within him. "What a helpmeet she would be to a man!" was his thought.

But Long Sandy took the self-righteous objector by the arm and walked him toward his own tent, speaking few but emphatic words:

"Mister, little Kitty is a member of my family. Hereafter anybody casting any aspersions on the character of any of my family is accountable to me. You understand? Good night, sir."

This morning the Clan are on the move.

The Colonel and his wife have already selected a site for house and printing office and are preparing to winter at Skagway. They will go with the Parson and the Doctor at full tide to Dyea to help them on their way that far.

Long Sandy is the proudest man in the camp. Yesterday morning a lonely old bachelor of seventy; today he is the happy father of a charming daughter of thirty-five and the grandfather of two beautiful and interesting young girls. He would not trade places with any Klondike king of them all. He has already bought a boat and is taking his "Family" with their tent, clothing, cooking utensils and stove to Dyea,

and will return to Skagway at once and see about getting their large outfit over.

Schofield and his wife made an early start this morning for Lake Bennett. The reporter has already got nearly all his winter's outfit over the mountains, and it only remains to get Mrs. Schofield and himself with the little clothing and bedding they have here over to the lake, where their boat awaits them. They will be the first of the Clan to reach Dawson, for the great newspaper for which Schofield works provides well for its employees.

Walters and Scotty have joined fortunes, and their boat, purchased for a trifle from one of the defeated, lies on the beach, loaded and ready for the tide.

Scotty is the most popular man on the beach this morning, because the most useful. He is a typical and experienced gold miner. He is a never-ending source of amusement to his comrades, but is also their main dependence. Born in the North of Ireland, you sometimes think him all Scotch till you look at the whimsical face of him and hear the upward lilt at the end of his sentences and his ready wit; then you pronounce him all Irish.

What Scotty has not done in the way of occupation in all the States and Territories of the West is hardly worth mentioning. Quartz and placer miner, muleteer, cowboy, cook, justice of the peace, marshal, carpenter, blacksmith, hotelkeeper, rancher—but what is the use? Everything that an honest man has to do on the frontier he has tried, and has succeeded at all. He says he has never tried preaching and the queer expressions that slip from his tobacco-stained lips so easily are

hardly compatible with the sacred calling, though they are more funny than profane, compelling a smile even from the Parson; but frequent quotations from the Scriptures, always unexpected but strangely apt, show the strict Scotch Presbyterian discipline of his early years. His lank figure, stooping at the shoulders, his grizzled hair and furrowed face, his slouching but rapid gait, an equanimity that no circumstance can ruffle, an adaptability that readily meets and fits into every emergency; and withal a queer, twisted, yet sensible way of viewing life—these make Scotty Bartlett unique. You laugh when he comes—laugh with and laugh at him—but when you need help you go first of all to him. Walters says Scotty is a wizard, able to conjure up from nothing the article that the need of the moment demands. No matter what you ask for, a needle or a button to mend your pants, a piece of string or wire to fix a broken implement, a screw or nail to repair the camp kit, a bandage or piece of court plaster for cut or bruise, a pocket toolbox of his own invention and manufacture—any of these or of a hundred other possible necessities for the trail or camp are instantly producible on demand. "Our Walking Emporium," the Colonel calls him.

VIII

NORTHWESTWARD HO!

THE head of Lynn Canal presented a strange and busy scene that morning early in September. On the gravelly beach hundreds of men were busy setting up their "knock-down" boats. The sounds of hammers, saws, wagons and human voices in song or profanity were heard on every side. The nest of human ants was stirred by the big stick of approaching winter. The congestion of the White Pass, blocked as it was by horses and piles of goods, had forced thousands of men back to Skagway. Many of them, despairing of traversing the mountains and reaching the Klondike before winter set in, were marking off lots and getting out logs to build houses for the winter. Hundreds of others, dismayed by the Pass, out of money, discouraged and beaten, were trying to sell for a tenth of their value the food and equipment they had brought from the States. But thousands of the pluckier ones, and those who had taken more rational thought for the morrow, were already launching their boats and loading their goods anew to try the Chilcoot Pass from Dyea, three miles distant from Skagway.

The bay was dotted with hundreds of craft, from the peterborough to the square scow. Perhaps not one in twenty of these men had ever built a boat or navigated one, but all were launching forth, risking life

and goods in an effort to beat each other in the race to Dyea.

Now the boats of our friends were loaded, and in the channel of the shallow creek awaiting the tide to float them. The Parson's boat was nearest the water, Scotty's a little higher up, while Sandy's was highest of all, placed with nice judgment at the point where it would float just in time to be rowed to Dyea on the extreme summit of the tide, thus saving time at both ends. For Long Sandy was facing his big task intelligently, and knew that time at this end of the trail was the most important element in settling the question whether he was to get his " Family " to Dawson before winter.

The extreme rise and fall of the tide at Skagway shows a difference of about thirty feet, and the flood tide advances with a rush. When it reached their boat the Parson and Colonel seized their oars with the joy of expert boatmen. Mrs. De Long was at the rudder, while the little bow-legged Doctor—always most content when idle—lounged on the warbags and blankets in the bow.

" Steer for Face Mountain," said the Parson; for there that rugged Indian face, marvelously cut, with a look of stolid endurance, majestic, eternal, gazed into the sky, the highest and most sublime of the peaks surrounding the bay. The boat, propelled by the two big men, swerved past the other craft. Unconsciously the Parson quickened his stroke, reaching well forward and swinging back, thrilling with life at every sweep of the oar. Thoughts of the joyous time when he was stroke of the 'varsity crew in an Eastern college hard-

ened his muscles, until presently he was putting his strength into his work as if the rival eight were pressing him. The Colonel, keeping well up at the first and thinking thoughts of his own college races, presently found the race a gruelling one.

"Hold up a bit, Parson," he puffed; "the editor's chair—is not the training—your free life has been—I haven't—my wind is going—give me a year or two—of Klondike—and I'll pull with you!"

A shout caught them, and alongside ranged the smaller and more shapely craft of Walters and Scotty, their goods well stowed, and the oarsmen almost equal to the first two.

"We'll run a race wi' ye!"

"None of that," said the Colonel; "I'm blown already, and the Parson has a long scramble before him over the mountains. We'll do well if we buck this head wind and get the boats to Dyea before the tide changes."

"See those fellows," called Walters; "they'll sink in a minute"—pointing to an overloaded boat in which five awkward men were making slow and zigzag progress. Their oars rose and fell uncertainly and irregularly, as Walters said, "like the paddles of a dying duck." The wind was increasing and meeting the tide; little whitecaps began to fly, dripping over the gunwales, which were almost on a level with the water. The panic-stricken men ceased to row, and, as they were moving awkwardly about, the boat shipped water again and again.

"Look out there," called the Parson. "Keep perfectly still until we get to you."

A quick stroke or two and the boat of our friends grazed the bow of the sinking craft.

"Throw us the painter!"

The men gazed blankly at each other.

"The rope in the bow of your boat."

Then, as one stumbled forward, tilting the boat and shipping more water—"No, sit down!" the Parson commanded. "Mrs. De Long, you have some sense. Make it fast, please. That's right," as the lady deftly grasped the rope and took a turn around the rudder post.

"Steady now, don't move; we're nearing shallow water."

And just as the lurching boat was settling the Parson leaped from his own with his high hip boots defending him and hauled the sinking craft ashore in the nick of time. The frightened men tumbled ashore after him. They were the band of college students.

"Step lively, boys," he said brusquely; "your goods are soaking in the water. Here, pile them on these rocks. Now all hands turn the boat over. Have you oakum and a calking iron?"

"No."

"Evidently; I have the oakum. Hello, Scotty, have you an extra iron? I knew you would have," as Scotty flung it ashore. "Here, this way—ram it in tight. Camp here to-day and dry your goods and then try it again. What will you do in the White Horse Rapids if you can't navigate this still bay for three miles?" Then, as the grateful men crowded around him with their thanks, he sprang aboard again.

"A ship of fools!" quoted Walters. "The old

Yukon will have a jolly time playing skittles with those fellows."

"They are the kind of fools out of which wise men are made," replied the Parson. "Theirs is a teachable ignorance. Did you note their pluck? They had a very narrow escape from drowning, but not one of them hinted a desire to give up. They'll win." And the two boats pulled around the rocky point of Smuggler's Cove, heading for Dyea.

At Dyea there was another scene of confusion and bustle. A long muddy flat, and above it low sandy meadows with bunches of lush grass alternating with raspberries and currant bushes, with clumps of evergreen here and there and shallow ponds. A cluster of Indian shacks, tents and salmon-weirs bordered the Dyea River. Half a mile up the beach stood a rude-looking store and lodging-house combined, erected by Healey, the famous Klondike merchant. The great fleet of boats began to pour their contents here and there upon the grass and among the bushes. Gawking helplessly or working purposefully, according to temperament and experience, the men crowded the beach. Down from the store came a line of horses, mules and donkeys with their pack-saddles, ready for hire. Broad-shouldered, stocky men loafed about, dickering with the stampeders for their packs. The Parson and the Colonel unloaded the two tons of provisions from the boat, piling them on a grassy hummock and covering them with tarpaulins, while the little Doctor, in his big gray coat, stared at the goods and pulled on his pipe. The tide was still rising.

"You'll have to stay here about an hour," said the

Parson, " and then start at the turn of the tide. The bottom falls out of this channel, and too long a delay will mean that you can't launch your boat for another twelve hours. I brought a brush and paint along, Mrs. De Long, and I am going to put your name on the boat. This is my parting gift to you."

" Now, Parson," said the Colonel, " I can't allow that. I will pay you the price of the boat."

" I would not think of it," replied the Parson. " The boat has served its purpose so far as I am concerned, and saved me more than its price. I cannot take it across the Pass with me. May it give you some pleasure this winter. If you will just sit by the goods a while I'll go up to the roadhouse and see about storing them for the night."

Already hundreds of men were adjusting their pack-straps and making ready for the burdens of the trail. Indian men and squaws, even the children, were clamoring for packs. A brawny savage with flat face and thick lips accosted the Parson.

" Hello, Laplate," he said. " You mushem Chilcoot?"

" Nowitka," said the Parson.

The Chilcat stepped to the Parson's canvas-covered flour sacks and, heaping three of the fifty-pound sacks together, fastened them in his queer pack-straps.

" Me pack 'em cultus (free) roadhouse for you."

" Have you a corner on that graft?" asked Walters, coming up with a laugh. " Can't I come in on this?"

" You no Laplate. Me fader, dis," indicating the Parson. And, shouldering his pack, the Indian and

the Parson moved up the trail, leaving the others on guard. After a while the preacher came back, laughing heartily.

"Whom do you think I found at the store, weighing out goods? No less a person than a former interpreter of mine, Billy Robinson. He is the official weigher for the company here, and as the scales are evidently as adjustable as the owner's conscience, Billy is making a good thing of it both for the storekeeper and himself. He weighs the goods for the packers before they load them on their mules. He comes about as near to the correct figures in his weighing as he formerly did to the correct English when he was interpreting for me.

"Let me give you an example: When I came green to southeastern Alaska, to that first mission field on the coast, Billy was a bright half-breed boy of fourteen. He lived in my house, washed dishes for me, and stood between my ignorance of the language and the still more marked ignorance of English on the part of the Indians. The boy knew ordinary trade English, but little else. The missionary, before he learns the language, is entirely helpless; the interpreter says what he pleases, and the missionary has no means of correcting him. Often I found out afterward that, instead of the Scripture the interpreter was supposed to be unfolding to the natives, he was blowing his own horn and working some scheme to his own advantage. Billy was not guilty of this, but he made some queer mistakes. I remember that one of the first chapters I got him to interpret was the Shepherd Psalm.

"Sheep! in Alaska!" chuckled Scotty.

"Well," said the Parson, "what more simple to the natives, I thought, than that beautiful Twenty-third Psalm? As my custom was, I went over it with Billy before going to the prayer meeting. You know how it reads?"—and the Parson softened his voice intuitively as the sacred words rolled forth:

"'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.'

"As we were preparing the lesson Billy hung up almost on the first word:

"'What's a Shepherd?' he asked.

"'Did you never see sheep?' I replied.

"'No, I *no see* sheep.'

"I had no pictures, so I tried to explain what a sheep was.

"'Oh, yes,' he said, seeming to catch the idea, 'sheep all same *genou*,' using the *Thlinget* for the White Mountain goats, which are found so plentifully in this region, and which the Indians hunt for their skins and flesh.

"'Well,' I said, 'the shepherd looks after the sheep.'

"'Man, he goes after *genou*,' and then he used the term 'goat hunter' for the shepherd; and with that key idea, the rest was easy. I noticed a queer look on the stolid faces of the natives as Billy interpreted my sermon, but until I had learned the language myself I was ignorant of Billy's rendering of the verse. Here it is: 'The Great Chief above is the goat hunter who hunts me. I do not want him. He shoots me down on the green grass and drags me down to

the quiet sea-beach!' And now here is Billy weighing my provisions and starting me over the Pass. I think he will be a little more than fair with my goods."

"Yes," Scotty said, "and mony is the meenister o' the Kirk who comes no nearer to the sense of Scripture."

The water was whispering shrilly, the hot sand fairly singing as the high tide of the full moon flooded it.

"Well, friends, our trails fork here," said the Parson. "God bless you and bring you safe across the Pass when spring comes! Start your paper, Colonel, and send me copies when you can. Judging from what has been told me, there is very little chance of getting mail into the Klondike this winter. I'll keep in long distance touch with you if possible."

He shoved off the boat with a powerful push and stood waving farewell as long as the Colonel and his wife could see him.

"John," said Mrs. De Long, "this is a crime to allow the Parson to plunge into that awful wilderness with the little Doctor dangling, a dead weight, about his neck and without any money. And you are the guilty one. How could you do it! Let's call him back and tell him!"

"Never mind, my dear," said the Colonel. "He'll get through; you can't defeat a man like that nor handicap him. The Doctor is heavy as lead now; he'll be wings to the Parson by and by." But, unconvinced, the lady shook her head.

IX

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

"THE family" came sweeping up on the tip of the tide, Uncle Sandy pulling the oars of the dory, Viva steering with a big paddle, Auntie May sitting in the bow, Kitty facing Viva, gazing and adoring, and Brutus, as usual, resting his huge head on his mistress' feet. A large Klondike stove, two tents, warbags full of clothing, pack-bags full of robes and clothing, and enough food to last a week composed the freight of the small craft.

"Hello, Sandy," called the Parson, as he assisted Mrs. Randall ashore. "Walter and I will help Viva with her tent, and I have already secured some Indians to pack for you. Take the turn of the tide back to Skagway for your goods."

"Oh, that's all arranged," said Viva. "I am to receive and check off the stuff here, and Uncle Sandy is to send it to me on the night tide. He is going to get a couple of boats and load them up this evening. I'll hang my lantern right here, Uncle. And remember what I said—you're to leave at least a thousand pounds of that stuff at Skagway." For the girl had been doing some figuring, with appalling results.

"Now, dearie," began the old miner, lamely, "I guess we can manage to get it all to Dawson. You and your father will need it."

But the imperious little lady soon brought him to terms. " See here, Uncle Sandy," she said, running to him and hugging his arm in both of hers, " I am beginning to find out that you are a gay deceiver, and I've got to discipline you. I've adopted you, and this is the age of obedient uncles. I believe you're planning to pay for that heavy stuff out of your own pocket; and I'll not have it!

" Now, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'll find out from these Indians to-day just what it's going to cost per pound to get our goods to Bennett. You leave that canned stuff—sell it or put it in storage—and to-night when you get home we'll take the whole bill of goods and go over it and figure out just what we can take.

" But if you're going to try to pull the wool over the eyes of your Lassie there's going to be trouble. Now, be a sweet old Uncle and accept your little girl as a partner and take her into your confidence. Won't you? " She stood on tiptoe, locked her hands behind his neck and drew his head down to hers.

Poor Sandy was all broken up. It had seemed so easy to the simple-hearted old backwoodsman to deceive any woman in business matters—especially a young girl like this. And now his deep plan of loving self-sacrifice had come to naught. He choked and gurgled, but the words wouldn't come.

The Parson came to his rescue. A vigorous hand lit with a resounding whack between the old man's shoulders and a jolly voice shouted, " What did I tell you? If you had had as much experience as I you'd know it is an easy job to hoodwink a man, compared

with a woman—especially this kind of woman. But" —lowering his voice and speaking earnestly—" Viva is right. You should consult her in everything. It's the only way."

Then to the girl he said, " You realize that you three are everything in the world to my friend here. He has nobody but you. You must not deprive him of the joy of serving you in his own way. You are overpaying him every hour for all he is doing, or can do, for you. Be good to him by letting him be good to you. Make a reasonable reduction in your outfit and let Sandy help you with the rest. Now, you two sillies, break away and go about your business. The tide's ebbing and will leave your boat high and dry in a minute."

The girl jerked the old miner's head to hers with a little convulsive squeeze, gave him a butterfly kiss on the eye, and released him.

" All right, Uncle Sandy," she said. " We'll talk it over to-night."

Just then a deep canine voice boomed from a nearby tent. Long Sandy awoke from the ecstasy of the unwonted caress. " Why, I was forgetting Cassius," and he hurried to his tent.

" Let's see what the two dogs will do," and the little company waited.

" What a pair!" was the general exclamation as the two magnificent animals approached each other. They were almost exactly alike in size, weight, build and color—Cassius showing a shading of light brown on his yellow areas and a brown streak between his eyes, while Brutus was pure yellow and white. But both

were St. Bernards of the largest size, both in the prime of life, both well fed and well groomed and showing the thoroughbred from the massive head with its great strong jaws, heavy jowls, deep, intelligent eyes and sensitive nose to the great heavily fringed, curving tail. They both showed strength, dignity and good-nature in every movement.

As Cassius came with his master, Brutus rose to meet him; and never did the illustrious Roman senators for whom they were named show more stately courtesy and pride. Heads up, tails rigid with a tentative sideways swing of not unfriendly inquiry, they halted when within a few feet of each other.

Then Brutus turned on his mistress a questioning look and Cassius the same upon his master. Finding that master and mistress were evidently on friendly terms with each other their doubts vanished. The stiff tails began to wag and with nose touchings and friendly smellings they accepted each other's acquaintance. Commanded to shake hands all around, they went through the ceremony with solemn decorum. But when Viva tried to make them shake hands with each other they turned their heads aside with a bored and weary look that set everybody laughing. It was evidently beneath the dignity of either to shake hands with a dog.

"Cassius regularly packs his fifty pounds along the trail," said Sandy.

"Brutus packs fifty pounds right along," responded Viva.

"Brutus hauls me along the trail in the winter all by himself," boasted Viva.

"Cassius hauls me, and likes it," chanted Sandy.

"A braw team they'll make," said Scotty. "An' sure ye'll need them right now. It's every man to his pack from here on—an' hurry!"

To-day it is the girding of the strong man to run his race on the morrow. The goods must be got together, weighed and marked; packers must be hired and their burdens assigned; pack-straps must be prepared and adjusted; stoves and dishes and food for the trail must be got ready.

For this host is not an organized army with a commander and general staff to plan and provide and give marching orders. It is an unwieldly aggregation of individuals. All have the same task and the same purpose—to get themselves and their provisions to the Land of Gold; but each must work out his own individual problem in his own way.

Even in a homogeneous company like the Clan each faced the stress of the morrow with a different attitude of mind.

To the Parson this "call of the wild" met with a bounding response. It was a trumpet call to battle, and he answered it joyously. He was here to do "first things," to carry to the farthest pioneers of the gold-mad army that Gospel of hope, courage and love that had been mellowing his own mind and heart with the passing years. He was here less as a preacher than as a man among men, to do whatever needed to be done for his fellows—from binding a broken pack-strap with a leather "whang" to pointing a way-fallen pilgrim to the Celestial City of Gold. And he was here as a boy among "the boys," to excel in

their sports, to enjoy their fun, to help them in their battles—especially their battles with themselves—and to apply the "rules of the game," which, after all, are a leaf from the great code of the Laws of the Kingdom, to the settlement of their difficulties and the safeguarding of their lives in places where all codified human laws were lacking.

Walters faced the Pass in a very different spirit. Bold as a lion, true as steel, rooted and grounded in honor, yet his sense of the humorous and ridiculous was overpowering. The twinkle was never out of those blue eyes, nor the upward twitch long absent from the wide mouth. There was something of the happy-go-lucky daredevil in him, but more, much more, of the man. To him the Klondike stampede was a great "lark," and its constantly occurring emergencies and difficulties to be greeted with a laugh and overcome by a leap; and yet he cherished a serious purpose to "make good" and repay with rich interest the money borrowed for the venture.

He did not intend to open a law book in the North. His Winchester was never long absent from his reach, and the bears, moose, caribou and white mountain sheep would often hear its crack. Adventure—the lure of the mountains and pathless wilds—that was his real motive for joining the great stampede. In the inner pocket of his mackinaw was the latest volume of Kipling's tales, and in another a traveling chess set; and at the first he and the Parson would often shake appreciative sides together, and over the latter bend thoughtful brows till far into the night.

The charm and lure of the Northwest were now,

however, enhanced a hundredfold, and a joyful purpose never dreamed of till yesterday imparted to this wild journey. Viva would be on the same long trail and sometimes he could see and talk with her, perhaps serve her in some way. He hardly dared to dream as yet of winning her for his own—that possibility seemed as remote and cloudy, albeit as radiant, as heaven. But he would be with her, hear her voice, even touch her hand—and the mere thought thrilled him and brought a light to his eyes never seen there before.

Scotty contemplated the Pass and its difficulties with equanimity as another episode of an eventful life. The Little Doctor regarded it with bewilderment and fear.

Thus each in his own way faced the morrow's adventure. The Parson and the Doctor spent the night on the floor of the roadhouse, with sacks of flour and bags of beans for a bed. The Parson was up before daylight, baked a batch of biscuit and warmed up some beans and made some coffee for himself and partner—then, the Trail.

"Horses can travel the Chilcoot trail but twelve miles to Sheep Camp," said a packer. "It is a tough trail all the way, and beyond Sheep Camp you scramble up the mountain with your pack on your own back."

The price charged for that twelve miles was appalling. "I'll settle this bill," said the Parson to the Doctor; "your turn will come later on."

Scotty and Walters, listening, saw the Doctor's face lighten with relief, but the Parson was ignorant of

the cause. "The little good-for-nothing will catch the spirit after all," he thought. "This first stage must be made to-day and to-morrow if possible."

"Hello, Judge," he called. "Can this be you?" as the man in charge of the pack-train came in sight, dressed in packer's boots and leggings, with blue mackinaw and red shirt. "The last I heard of you you were Mayor of Victoria. What are you doing down here? Got klondicitis?"

"This is my Klondike," answered the Judge, "and my pack-train. I am making more money just now than when I was Mayor. Let me give you a lift on my saddle horse."

"Oh, no," declined the Parson. "I need hardening. I'll trudge along and look after my goods. I am good for one hundred pounds myself to Sheep Camp."

The little Doctor looked wistfully at the horse, but the Judge sized him up in an instant and, hardening his heart, said, "You'd better be toughening your muscles, too, Doctor. Start with fifty pounds. Here, I'll fix it on your strap for you." But the Doctor gripped his little medicine case, muttered something about a sick man up the trail, and slunk away.

The scenes of that trail will never fade from the memories of those who essayed the fearful path. It was an army of tenderfeet, mostly from city life, practically all entirely unused to any of the thousand difficulties that they must encounter. The first hundred yards began to be strewn with portions of the loads with which men started, and all along that terrible trail, as the difficulties multiplied, the discarded

packs increased. For miles the trail lay along the bed of the little river; around bowlders, sharp rocks, quicksands; jutting rocks to be scrambled over, black muck to be "plouted" through; always the trail growing steeper, more rugged; always the faces of the men more strained; eyeballs starting, weary limbs staggering. There was in this first stampede that element of anxiety and fear of failure that hardened the hearts of men as no other trail ever did.

The day of grace was very short. Already the snow was beginning to fall. As the Parson approached Sheep Camp swirling eddies of snow appeared on the whitening mountain tops. Glaciers and gathering snow hung threateningly almost over their heads as they bored into an unknown land, with the necessity upon them, if they would attain the El Dorado of their hopes, of getting a ton or more of provisions for every man over the thirty miles of mountains and then down the six hundred miles of rapid and dangerous river before the Arctic winter should come swooping and howling down upon them, to lock the gate to the land of gold by freezing the upper reaches of the Yukon. A mad crowd, with all instincts of manliness and fellow feeling crushed out by the heaviness of the way! Here the Parson, bending over his hundred-pound sack, passed a stalwart fellow sitting on his burden gazing up at the mountains with tears streaming down his face. "A quitter," thought the Parson with some contempt but more pity. Just before him a slender young boy of seventeen stumbled forward and fell with his face in the mud, his pack-strap on his neck jamming him.



THAT TRAIL WILL NEVER FADE FROM THE MEMORIES OF THOSE WHO ESSAYED THE FEARFUL PATH

"Are you hurt, my boy?" asked the Parson as he lifted the lad to his feet.

The boy laughed. "Thank you, sir; that's about the tenth fall; ten more ought to bring me to Sheep Camp."

"You're right, my boy," he said. "A sure winner," he thought. "You can't defeat a man like that."

The Parson relayed, doing double time, for the dollars must be saved as much as possible and Sheep Camp was only twelve miles from Dyea. One mile with one pack, and then back a mile and up with the other pack again. His Klondike stove with telescoped pipe in the oven, and plates, kettles and stove feet made one compact package, with half a sack of flour and some beans and bacon disposed in the fireplace and the corners.

"If I am to get my pick of the packers and make time I must feed them," planned the Parson. "I must make it an object for them to choose me;" for he foresaw that the packers would be the kings of the trail with all the rest at their mercy.

To the Parson's astonishment Long Sandy came up with a moderate load, followed by the two dogs, each with a pack. He dropped against his pack by the side of his friend.

"Lassie is attending to the weighing of the goods and starting the Indians, with Kitty helping her by checking off the packages," he explained. "I am going on to prepare camps at Sheep Camp and Long Lake for my family. Luckily the Indians have their own grub and will not need any attention until they reach

Bennett. I must be there when they come and pay them off."

"Did you and Viva come to an agreement about the money?" the Parson inquired.

"Well, ye-e-es, in a way. It was like this: My watch said eleven when I got the last load from Skagway piled on the Dyea beach. I darsent bring the canned stuff. I've quit trying to fool Lassie or to cross her wishes. I sold the stuff to the Colonel at half price, which was better than I hoped to do. Mrs. Randall had coffee made (she makes me call her May now), and when she and Kitty had turned in Viva and I got out the manifests and went at it. We figured and talked till two o'clock this morning. With all the fancies and all the water left out of their outfit they have five thousand pounds of grub for the three of them. The Indians will get a flat rate of fifty cents a pound to pack it to Bennett. It didn't take my Lassie five minutes to see that it would cost her a round twenty-five hundred dollars to get the grub to Bennett, to say nothing of the freight on a scow from there to Dawson, the customs robbers at Tagish and all that. Then my Lassie brought out her money and we counted it—a little less than a thousand!"

"A mere drop in the bucket," quoth the Parson.

"Yes," said Sandy. "I had seen it coming. Parson, I've always had great respect for God—when I'd lie on my back at night and see the stars winking through the spruce branches and remember what I'd read about them; or watch the wonder of the Northern Light; or the miracle of life in the

spring. But I think more of Him now than ever; I didn't know that even He could make such a wonder as my Lassie.

" When she had got through figuring and counting her money she looked me straight in the eye for two or three minutes. ' Uncle Sandy! ' she said, and the tears came in a flood, and she put her face down on my knee and cried. How she did cry!—the big sobs shaking her all over—and every one of them racking my heart."

" Poor child! " sympathized the Parson. " What did you say? "

" I didn't say a word—I couldn't. Then the good Lord showed me what to do. I put my hand inside my shirt and unbuckled my belt. I have a round ten thousand in it in greenbacks and Canadian notes. I raised her head a little and slipped the belt under it for a pillow. ' You forgot to count this in,' I said."

" Did she catch on? " the Parson queried.

" She didn't know what I meant at first, but after a little she raised her head and I counted the money out before her—five-hundred-dollar bills and hundreds and fifties and twenties. Then I reached for her thousand and put mine on top of it. At that she jumped straight up. ' Uncle Sandy,' she screamed, ' what are you doing? That's yours. I couldn't; I couldn't.'

" I took her hand and drew her to me. ' Lassie,' I said, ' I thought you adopted me as your uncle and partner. Remember the Parson's advice. If you don't adopt me into the family and let me help take you into the Klondike to find your father I've nothing

more to live for; and I swear I'll burn this bunch of green and yellow paper up right now,' and I held it to the candle."

"What a raw bluff for an old gambler like you to put up on the poor girl!" chided the Parson.

"Well, it got her. She put her arms around my neck and cried some more; but it was different now. Then she said, 'Uncle Sandy, hadn't you better hold me on your lap? I'm nothing but your poor, foolish little girl.'

"You may believe me or not, but that was the first time in all my life that a girl sat in my lap. She snuggled up in my arms like a kitten and rubbed her cheek against my hand."

"And I'll wager it will not be the last time," cried the Parson enviously.

"I hope not; I hope not," replied Sandy. "Well, we sat like that a long time. We didn't talk; we didn't need to. After a while my dear child grew heavier. I looked in her face; she was fast asleep. I carried her behind the blanket curtain and laid her on her bed beside Kitty without waking her. I took off her shoes and pulled the blanket over her. It seemed as if she had always been my little daughter—my baby. Then I took my own blankets and lay down on the tent floor in front of the door. Parson, I don't know what I have ever done for the Lord that He should give me such a blessing in my old age. If He gives me any more happiness in heaven than I felt last night with my Lassie in my arms He'll sure have to give me a stronger frame to stand it."

He stood up and adjusted his pack. Brutus and Cassius, who had been crouching on the ground to ease their burdens, got up, wagging their tails.

"This is my last long mush, I think," he said—"the last of many—and the best. I never before had anything at the end of the trail worth going for. I'll soon be ready to cross the Great Divide."

His mood changed as he watched the procession. "This is the worst bunch of tenderfeet I ever saw. Not one in twenty knows how to make up a pack; and such stuff as they are bringing in! See that one," as a red-faced man with English-cut clothes and knee breeches came toiling up, sweating profusely, with a canvas cot and rubber air bed and pillows, folding chair and table. "How many miles do you give him with that truck? I'll bet he doesn't go twelve."

"I think you're right," said the Parson. "He's on the verge of collapse now; he'll not get to the Stone House."

"Well, I must hurry on to Sheep Camp and prepare for my Family," and the tall figure of the old pioneer strode rapidly up the trail.

Noon found the Parson hungry. The little Doctor had not doubled on his trail as the Parson had, but with the unwilling guidance of Scotty had gone on to Sheep Camp. The Parson did not wish to take the time to undo his stove pack and cook. The grateful smell of fresh flapjacks smote his nostrils. A burly packer was cooking his noonday meal over a spruce fire. There were six of these flapjacks—too big a meal for one man. "Say, there," the Parson said to

the rough wayfarer, "here's a dollar for half of your flaps."

The man snarled like a dog. "To hell with you and your money," he said. "Do you think I'm keeping a hotel?"

The Parson's hands clinched involuntarily and then relaxed again as he said, "Well, friend, I hope you'll not find yourself rebuffed along the trail of life when you grow hungry!"

Long Sandy spoke at the Parson's elbow, "I came back to find you. I've got my coffee pot and frying pan, and the flour mixed in a kettle. I'll get them ready in ten minutes. Yon cur is a *cheechako;* he'll learn better when God softens him by hard knocks." And the two old campers were shortly eating their meal together.

The horses had a sad time. The trail pulled their shoes and broke their hoofs and skinned their legs as they staggered, heavy-laden, up the trail; and now and again the crack of a revolver resounded as the owner of a broken-legged beast mercifully ended its life. Here and there were small blockades formed by fallen horses jammed in the crevices of the rocks and unable to rise out of the way of others. Occasionally rose quivering on the air the pitiful scream of a horse in agony; but always the merciless procession moved on like an army driven by a relentless general, reckless of the lives of his soldiers.

The Parson's heart was full. He had a way with men and horses that seemed to bring mysterious relief. "Your pack-strap is too tight," he said to a big man from the city, who was urging a cringing cayuse

with blows from a heavy stick. "The horse is smothering. Here, that's better," stepping to the animal. "I'll guide him around this point; you're only delaying yourself by mistreating the brute."

"Hello! my friend," he called to another who was standing by the side of his mule under a cliff, trying to jam himself and animal tight against the wall to give way to the passing procession. The heavy pack, ignorantly put on, had fallen down and was hanging under the belly of the poor beast. The whole strength and attention of the man must be given to preventing the animal from surging over the precipice or getting in the way of other pack animals. One after another the wayfarers passed him, and the Parson saw him speak to a number, but not one halted. They were driven by a relentless master. There is no slave-driver so cruel as the gold-lust.

"Well, friend," said the Parson to the discouraged man as he ranged alongside, "you seem to be in trouble. Can I help you?"

Tears brimmed the eyes of the poor fellow, a slim young man from an eastern city. "Well, sir," he said, "I suppose I'm a fool, but I'm finding it out. I thought I had learned to put on a pack-saddle, but it appears I was mistaken. I have stood here for two hours and have asked a hundred men for help, offering to pay them for their time, but not one would stop."

"Easy," said the Parson, patting the animal's head. "Steady, boy, nobody is going to hurt you."

"Now," he directed the young man, "take it clear off and we'll put just half this load on the animal.

Not that way—this. Now you will save time by coming back for the rest of the load.

"These men," he mused, "are not inhuman brutes; they are simply dazed and beaten down by the repeated blows of unforeseen circumstances. Theirs is not inborn selfishness or hardness of heart, but only crass ignorance. Their better selves will come to the surface after a while, and these knocks and kicks of misfortune will stiffen their moral fiber. It is, after all, God's process of making men, and they will be worthy—those who have grit enough—of all that it costs." And so he came to Sheep Camp, and found the Doctor, Scotty, Walters and the College Boys putting up for the night in a hotel-tent.

X

SCOTTY'S SHAME

THE mists of the next morning lay thick on the heights as the Parson shouldered his Klondike stove, having employed at extravagant wages a band of packers.

" Now, men," he said, " I am giving you the standard rates up to date. I know you are striking almost every day for higher wages. I'll do this much more for you if you'll stay by me. I'll keep ahead of the column as you relay the goods and I'll have a good square meal of hot biscuit, bacon and beans for you whenever you come up with your packs. But I'm going to forge ahead, you understand that; and if you are to eat you must come up to me."

" All right, Parson, we'll point our noses toward that grub and you'll see us at mealtime." And that was why the Parson and his packers made better time than almost any other company.

But oh, that procession! Thirty miles long, of men small and large, fat and lean; Swedes, Norwegians, Germans, Irishmen, Scotchmen and, most of all, Americans. Here trudged with jokes and tricks upon each other (for the first two miles) the band of college students who had suddenly left their classes and dashed for the promised land of gold. There towered a tall farmer from Iowa, leading a

band of his neighbors; there an Irish truckman from Cincinnati, marshaling a doctor, two lawyers and another drayman.

The trail grew steeper and more rugged; there were no rounded bowlders now, but jagged rocks, splinters and slabs lay at all angles to be stumbled over, where a slip might mean a broken leg. No one could push ahead of that procession. If a man dropped out he must remain aside until there was a gap in the line where he could step in again. Ignorance led to numberless difficulties; leather shoes devoid of nails threw multitudes down on the rocks, maimed some, killed others; awkward packs striking against jutting rocks tumbled others over precipices; men of flabby muscles from cities found their knees trembling under them and failing them. Now the procession, stepping closely upon each other's heels as if in prison lockstep, began to zigzag up the face of the rock.

Always the company was leaving stragglers behind. Sometimes men would drop exhausted by the wayside and, though with undiminished courage, would find their physical strength entirely unequal to the steeper ascent. But more often the courage of a man suddenly failed him; and once nostalgia became acute it proved a stronger force within a man than even the gold-lust. Then there was no persuading or bullying a man into resuming the trail.

Another result seen everywhere was that the more selfish and hard qualities of men's hearts came to the surface. Lifelong neighbors fell out and would not speak to each other. As the anxiety of the men in-

creased lest they should not win to the land of gold, they became more brutal. The stress of the terrible ascent turned men into beasts.

The Parson with his stove and food and dishes on his back climbed almost in the front of the procession, and after him toiled his packers. The little Doctor, unencumbered by any load, except his little medicine case, slipped, staggered and complained, but dared not fall behind. What spirit he had was broken within him, and a terror that showed itself in wide-eyed staring and nervous starts took possession of him.

The Summit, a glacier with a foot of newly fallen snow upon it, was reached by noon. No fire could be made here, as the travelers were miles beyond timber-line. Cold biscuit, beans and canned beef were a poor substitute for a hot dinner. Not half the goods left at Sheep Camp could reach the Summit to-day.

A hasty lunch, and the Parson left the shivering Doctor in his big gray coat to guard the goods at the Summit, leading his band of packers back to Sheep Camp. They joined the procession again and toiled up the steep ascent. Then, improvising slats and canvas slips in which to slide their goods down the glacier to Crater Lake, they again paid a fearful price to the boatmen who were ferrying the goods across, and, weary and spent, they landed at nightfall at what one of the miners called " All-in Camp."

The cup of cold water in the top of the mountain, misnamed Crater Lake, was the dreariest spot on the trail. The wayfarers were four miles from a stick of wood. They had no fuel except their boxes. They

were eight miles from a pole; they could pitch no tents. Rain mingled with snow was driven upon them by a slashing wind from the Summit, chilling them to the marrow. Two or three thousand men were camped there at sundown, and still they were coming. There was not a foot of level ground in the whole region. Rough bowlders, sharp-edged rocks, jagged granite fragments everywhere. All around were heard the voices of packers bawling the names of their employers, like a scattered flock of quail crying for reunion. No one spoke if he could help it, or if he did it was to curse. With panting, sobbing breath they came, one by one, each throwing down his pack and falling upon it.

The Parson, who had been working as hard as any and carrying a heavier load than most, had to cook supper for his hungry packers. A glance at his boxes showed what he could venture to break in pieces for fuel. A flat rock, a tarpaulin for a windbreak, and soon the Klondike stove was set up and a fire going briskly in it. Far into the night he worked to feed his dozen packers; and how those men did eat! Beans bubbled on the stove, the biscuit went in and out of the oven, and the coffee pot yielded its life-giving contents again and again; and always the cry was for more.

In preparation for the night, sacks of beans and flour must first be disposed in the crevices of the rocks so as to make a reasonably level bed; a windbreak must be built of boxes and bowlders high enough and wide enough to admit of spreading the tent slantingly from it. This must be weighted at the corners so

that the wind would not blow it away. Scotty and Walters helped with more boxes and bowlders. The shelter was poor and sagging, but it had to do. Over the goods which would not stand the rain tarpaulins must be placed.

It was ten o'clock before the Parson himself got a bite to eat. By that time, with hunger satisfied and warmed with hot coffee through and through, the packers became jovial and communicative.

"You sure know how to smash things through, Parson," said one, "because you know how to treat your men. I am going to confess that we planned to desert you at this camp and strike somebody else at Sheep Camp for higher rates; but you have us going! Them biscuits are a winner; there's not another camp of packers on the trail has fared as well. We'll stay by you."

Scotty, as usual, was whistling "Bonnie Dundee" as he disposed things for the night in his own ingenious way. Walters chaffed the College Boys about their awkward efforts to make camp; only the Doctor stood apart, glum and silent. Even an enormous meal had not sweetened his countenance.

Men stumbled about the rocks in the darkness trying their best to shut out the rain from their goods. Always the inevitable epithet was heard. The mist shrouded the mountain and the rain, snow and wind did not cease.

Down from a shelter of rocks boomed a big voice: "I'd give five dollars for a piece of string."

"Come down, my friend," called the Parson; "I

have a pocket full of it for you; come and help yourself."

"Hold on there," said a voice, "until I get down. I want to shake hands with the man who will give something for nothing on this —— —— trail." And down came a tall young Irishman bearing the name of a famous general of the Civil War, whose nephew he was.

"There goes our tarpaulin sky high," said one of the College Students; "we'll never see it again."

"Here's one we can do without," called the Parson; "come and get it before your goods are soaked."

Then, raising his voice, the sweet and soothing strains of "Annie Laurie" rang out upon the storm. At first the men were silent, as though resenting this attempt at cheer; but presently a sweet tenor joined in from the College Band, then a bass from the Iowa farmers, until here and there above the rocks arose a strong chorus, swelling and diminishing with the gusts of wind. The anger, the ill-nature, disgust and despair of the weary company gave way; and when the Parson came by stages of sentimental, humorous and sailor songs to "Nearer, My God, to Thee" the chorus did not falter.

The little Doctor had eyed the preparations for the night with deepening distress and suspicion. His black eyes glowed like coals in the flickering firelight. There was nothing in all his experience that typed any part of this scene. He had never lain on the ground in his life or gone camping; he had never cooked a meal or even helped to wash dishes; he had never made a fire and hadn't the slightest conception of the

difference between green wood and dry wood. He had never pitched a tent or chopped a tree or handled a tool, except the surgeon's instruments. His ignorance of trail craft was amazing. The Parson eyed his blunders with humorous dismay, forecasting a winter in which he would have to care for this baby-man as a mother cares for her yearling child—this man whom the mission board had sent to "take care of him."

Walters deepened the Doctor's gloom by his sarcastic suggestions. "You have opened a boarding-house, all right, Parson," he said; "but I don't admire your choice of boarders."

"Run to your daddy, little one," he said when it came time to turn in, "and say 'Now I lay me.'"

The little Doctor scowled, but dared not reply. The Parson spread the blankets on the flour sacks and crawled in with the Doctor. But the pressure of the wind was too severe. The canvas sagged and flapped.

The Parson had worked fifteen hours that day with all his might, and sank instantly to sleep. Presently confused visions floated through his brain and he found himself, back in his young manhood, wiping tears from the face of a little brother and trying to hush his frantic cries. Suddenly his dream broke and he sat up with a start. The Doctor was crying shrilly, and presently his voice arose until he was simply boo-hooing at the top of his voice.

"What's the matter," cried the Parson, alarmed, "are you sick?"

"O-o-o-o-o-oh!" wept the Doctor. "I'm getting wet!"

"Well," said the Parson, in disgust and amazement,

"but I am, too, and I'm not crying about it." The Doctor continued to bawl.

"Stop that noise!" yelled a voice. "Can't you spank the little cuss and let us have some sleep?"

"Give the baby a bottle," suggested Walters.

"Ah!" groaned Scotty, "and him a Scot! I'll no believe it."

The College Boys laughed and hooted. Long Sandy, who, having made his camp ready at Long Lake, four miles further on, had returned this far on his way back to Dyea, came in his bare feet, gingerly stepping on the rocks, to the Parson's tent.

"If he is really sick," he said, "here's some good whisky."

"No," said the Parson, "he's only nervous and tired."

The Doctor was shameless in the midst of this jibing and cried out his reproaches as he wept: "Why didn't you tell me? Why did you bring me into this awful country to die?"

"This is the man, Dominie," called Walters, "whom they sent in to take care of you! He is doing it fine!"

"Here," soothed the Parson, "I'll fix this tarpaulin over you; and if you curl down under your blanket and close your mouth and eyes I think you will forget your troubles." And soon the camp was still except for the screeching wind and flapping tents.

The Parson lay long awake and pondered. The work that stretched before him among these rugged miners was as stimulating as a trumpet call. He shrank from none of it. He "smelled the battle afar off," and, like Job's warhorse, exulted in it. The so-called

"hardships and discomforts" were but trifling episodes of the day's work. He could play that game to the finish and win at every turn. But to be saddled at the outset with a helpless burden, a bawling cry-baby, without any prospect of alleviation through all the long winter, that was hard!

"I'll always be wondering what the little wretch will do next," he thought. "The fight is a good one, but he is a bad handicap. God give me patience and keep me from thrashing him!"

Scotty also was awake. The deep disgrace his race and Clan had suffered by the Doctor would not suffer him to sleep. The Parson chuckled as he heard the tossing Scotchman muttering, "An' him a Scot!—dearie me! Ah! A-a-ah! a Scot!"—And after a long pause again, "An' him a Scot!" And when the Parson awakened at the first streak of dawn he still heard his friend muttering, "An' him a Scot!"

And so the march went on. Down the slope of the mountain now, four miles to Long Lake. Again and again as the relays of goods came up the Parson viewed his rapidly diminishing little hoard of money, not with dismay, but with a calculating eye.

"I'll pay out all I have," he said, "and rely on what the Doctor carries of our partnership funds at the other end."

Scotty, bound to his promise to the Colonel not to reveal what he had learned about the Doctor and the "Soapy Smith" shell-game gang, yet ventured a canny hint.

"Parson," he said, "you're spending a good deal of money, and I take it you haven't much to spend. You'd

better either give it up till spring or leave half of your outfit behind and take your chances. You know the 'Prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, while the simple pass on and are punished!' It will cost you fifty cents a pound at least to get your goods these thirty miles; you haven't the money to take them all. Better leave the heavier articles now and go on as light as you dare."

"I believe you are right," assented the Parson. "I'll send back to Sheep Camp for no more goods. We'll take our chance in the Klondike with half an outfit, for I am not going to turn back. The Doctor will have enough funds to help us out for a while, even though prices are, as they say, one dollar a pound in the Klondike."

Walters, red in the face, opened his mouth to speak, but Scotty nudged him and they went away together, the little Doctor gazing after them with the pathetic eyes of a trapped fox.

"We'll leave the butter, the sugar and the milk," said the Parson. "We can do without them. Beans, rice, flour, bacon and a little dried fruit, with our lime juice to guard against scurvy, will be sufficient. We have no time to lose and no money to throw away. March on!" And again the procession formed, winding among the rocks and down the cliffs of the inland slope.

It took all day for the Parson and his packers to get to Long Lake—a camp among the rocks at the upper edge of the timber-line. Here he came ahead of his packers to cut wood and prepare dinner. The dwarf spruce, wind-blasted but richly resinous, fur-

nished fuel. Snow that melted as fast as it fell kept everything wet. The water supply was already polluted. One man lay in a tent by the lake very low with typhoid fever, and two others were showing symptoms of the dread disease.

The Parson set the Doctor at work among the sick, and himself carried water a quarter of a mile from the side of the mountain where it gushed from a bank of snow which had lain all summer unthawed in a gorge. Besides cooking three hot meals he made two trips back to Crater Lake, returning with heavy packs; thus traveling twenty miles that day, twelve of them with a hundred-pound pack on his back.

Long Sandy, rising before daylight and eating a cold breakfast of beans and oatmeal from the Parson's kettles, had gone back over the Summit with Brutus and Cassius and down to Sheep Camp.

Thither before noon came his precious Family, all on horseback from Dyea. For the efficient Viva had weighed out packs and dispatched with them twenty Indians—" bucks, squaws and papooses "—stocky little chaps of twelve carrying as much as an ordinary adult white man. This cavalcade would accomplish the thirty-mile journey to Bennett in from two to three days, and Long Sandy and Viva would meet them there and pay them.

Then all the Indians would return at once to Dyea with Sandy for other loads, leaving Viva, with Auntie May and Kitty, to receive the last of the outfit and prepare for the long voyage down the river.

No longer was there any " yours and mine " between

Sandy and Viva. Each handled their mutual funds as became necessary, while the faithful Kitty, proud of her arithmetic, kept the accounts. The communism of the Apostles was theirs, and the only strife in the Family was the unselfish effort of each to do the most for the others.

From Sheep Camp over the Summit Sandy and Viva must travel light with hands free that Sandy might help the plump Auntie May and Viva the inexperienced Kitty up and down the terrible rocks of that difficult ten miles. So Sandy carried only forty pounds of fur robe and tent, while Viva shouldered her beloved rifle, with cartridge belt and revolver. Only Brutus and Cassius carried full packs.

The ten miles from Sheep Camp to Long Lake was nothing to Sandy and Viva, but a severe ordeal to Mrs. Randall and Kitty. When they approached the Summit and joined the single-file procession through the soft snow of the steep and up the steps cut in the glacier their breath came in gasps, and their knees trembled. From Crater Lake to Long Lake was downhill and easier; but the two women hailed the camp-fire as shipwrecked mariners the land.

An hour before dark the Parson was busy cooking supper over a blazing spruce fire at Long Lake. His hungry packers were staggering in one by one with heavy loads and forming a ring around the fire. Clear, high, plaintive whistles sounded from the loose piles of rock on the mountainside, and now and then a little gray and white animal flitted timidly from burrow to burrow.

"I wonder," mused the Parson aloud, "if that is the same kind of cony spoken of in the Bible—'The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.'"

"He must be; he's a melancholy little cuss," said one of the packers, evidently an Irishman.

The Parson's eyes twinkled. "So that's your idea of everything connected with religion, is it?"

A cheery yodel sounded from the hill opposite them, and Viva, the embodiment of health and happiness, came leaping down the rocks, sure-footed as a mountain goat in her iron-shod boots, swinging her rifle in one hand while in the other she waved a bunch of ptarmigan. Kitty's lilting trill answered from the trail near by, while farther up the trail was heard the sweet tenor of Payson, the college student, singing "Marching Through Georgia." Long Sandy's big voice and Auntie May's, weary but cheerful, responded to Viva's yodel.

"Those are the voices of five as good Christians as I know," said the Parson to the packer. "You'll have to revise your idea of religion as necessarily melancholy. I think these conies are sad because they are so far from happy Palestine."

It was certainly a cheerful company that gathered around the Parson's camp-fire for a little "sing" after supper. Even the Doctor cracked a joke, and, vastly to the relief of the Parson, slept soundly that night and let the others sleep.

And in the morning, after the Doctor and the Parson and Auntie May had spent an hour in the sick man's tent, the lady preparing ptarmigan broth and

making his bed more comfortable, the Doctor administering soothing medicine, and the Parson trying to get some thought of the future into the fading brain and of courage and hope and faith into the failing heart, it was the little Doctor who astonished all the Clan by volunteering to stay with the sick man a couple of days and take care of him.

The others fared forth with their packs, were ferried across the crooked lake, and so on down eight more miles of rugged trail to the great scattered city of tents at Bennett.

BOOK II
THE YUKON

XI

THE LAKES

AS soon as you cross the high, snow-capped mountains that rim the ocean from Puget Sound to the Aleutian Islands—a continuous range for three thousand miles—you find yourself in a different world. Climate, vegetation, atmosphere, scenery, all are changed. The hanging clouds, the fogs, the rains have cleared away. The air is luminous, the distant peaks march up almost to your tent, the sky has turned from gray to blue, the entire landscape has taken life and color.

If you have crossed the range by the White or the Chilcoot Pass, and the time is early fall, you behold a scene of enchantment. Majestic rugged peaks covered with fresh snow gaze heavenward with rapt look, dark forests of evergreen climb the mountains to the snow line and reach eager hands up the gorges as if striving to draw themselves higher, and the beautiful Lakes Linderman and Bennett, blue as the sky, look upward into the azure depths which they reflect. The whole landscape aspires, and your spirit is drawn heavenward, exalted, refined in harmony with the scene.

And the colors! No impressionist artist could exaggerate them, though he might do violence to their wonderful harmony. The white of the newly fallen

snow, softened with a touch of blue, and rose-colored each morning for fifteen ecstatic minutes with the alpen-glow; the moss patches of the mountain shoulders, varied with berry bushes; and, lower down, the taller growth of willows, alders and thorns; and, still lower, the birch, the cottonwood, the service berry, the water maple—all of these and many other varieties of shrubs and trees touched by the delicate brush of the frost, and showing purple, brown, cardinal, magenta, russet, orange, yellow—a thousand tints; and the evergreens of countless shades—the pine, spruce, fir, hemlock and cedar; and the blue eyes of the lakes, lashed with dark trees and wide open at the wonder of it all—a glorious view, exquisite enough to draw a man's soul out of his body.

But, although there were thousands of human eyes by the lake shores, those September mornings of '97—shaken open at dawn by the urgent hand of the gold-lust, yet there were very few that saw the wonderful picture. They only viewed with dread the fresh snow and frost tints as menacing signs of approaching winter, and peered into the forests with appraising glances to find and mark for felling and sawing into lumber the finest trees.

The members of the Clan were as desperately busy as any, but some of them found time now and then to lift eyes and soul to the "Mountains of God." The day following his arrival at Bennett was Sunday, and the Parson, advertising his meeting on stumps and trees, made a big bonfire, placed by it his baby organ with Kitty to play it, distributed his little red song books, and, with Payson as chorister, held a service,

preaching on "The Greatest Quest" to the three or four dozen men who were not too tired or indifferent to attend.

On Tuesday night the Clan was called together by Scotty. The meeting was to be held in Schofield's big tent, and to be preceded by a grand Duck Mulligan Stew, prepared by Auntie May, assisted by Kitty and Fatty Lee, the cook of the College Boys. The redoubtable Viva had furnished the ducks, having annexed Uncle Sandy's new shotgun for the purpose.

The plans of all had been perfected for the long voyage down the river. Schofield and his wife were to sail on the morrow in their fine, expensive boat, just completed. It was to be manned by big Swedes who were thus working their passage into the gold fields—the "T'ree Yons—Yon Yonson, Yon Yensen and Yon Yacobson."

Scotty and Walters were busy whipsawing the lumber for their boat and getting the rest of their goods down from the Summit. They would be ready to start in a week or ten days.

The Parson had negotiated with Whisky Finnegan for a passage for himself and the Doctor and their outfit on one of two big scows the Irishman was building. The terms were the payment of a hundred dollars for each of them; and the Parson was to assist in the completion of the scow and also in its navigation to Dawson. They hoped to be ready in five or six days.

Long Sandy also had negotiated for the shipment of three tons of foodstuffs on Finnegan's scow at one hundred dollars per ton. His own outfit of three thousand

pounds brought over the Pass a month ago was stored in a warehouse at Bennett in charge of the little squad of Mounted Police. He would send a thousand pounds of this with the five thousand of Viva's outfit in the scow and take the ton that remained, with his precious Family and their clothes and bedding, in his new boat to Dawson.

Sandy had reached the Lake in time to take his pick of the spruce trees in the then uncut woods at its head, and with the help of a sturdy Indian had whip-sawed his lumber with great care, planed the boards and made a model boat, light, slim, long and shapely. He had even brought lead over the mountain and painted it—an unheard of display of pride. He himself knew not at the time why he had taken such pains with a river boat, to be used in one voyage and then, perhaps, chopped up for fuel or given away—but now he knew; and he completed his boat by painting its name, LASSIE, in blue letters on the white bow.

He would not start down the river until the scow was ready and their goods aboard; and would hover near on the long trip to guard the precious food and render assistance if the big, unwieldly craft got into trouble.

Walters came breezing into Schofield's tent with Scotty a half hour before dinner time, his face agrin. The Schofields and Sandy and his Family were there, the Parson not having arrived.

"I've seen the greatest show on earth to-day," said the young lawyer. "The Dominie sure belongs to the Church Militant. He's lightning when you get his battery charged."

"Why, was he in trouble?" Mrs. Randall's tone was anxious.

"Oh, no, not at all; no trouble at all," laughed Walters. "The other fellow had all the trouble. It was this way: We have our 'arm-strong' sawmill a mile from here in that nook yonder, and Whisky Finnegan's is close by where the Parson is sawing. We help each other.

"Well, Scotty had gone up the gulch to cut more timber, and the Parson was sawing with me. You know that thin one of the College Boys with the sunken chest? He and the other slim little fellow were whip-sawing in an awkward way lumber for their boat, which they are building right at the mouth of the creek. Payson and the other big student had gone up the trail after more grub.

"Well, there came a big red-faced bully and another man looking for a place to put their frame. There was no other place, so the big man thought he'd take that of the boys. He didn't say a word at first, but just began pushing aside the tools and tent of the young fellows, and then proceeded deliberately to take down the frame. The consumptive boy was all grit, but the big fellow could have swallowed him at one mouthful.

"'I'm going to have this place, that's all there is to it,' said the big fellow. 'Take your rickety shake-down out of this; you'll never get lumber that way, anyhow. Clear out, I say, or I'll smash your face.' And he tore away at the frame.

"The boys looked on, helpless. The red-faced brute and his partner were too big for them to tackle,

They had worked two or three days to get that frame up and the first log on it, and now their hopes of getting down the Yukon were vanishing."

"What a shame!" exclaimed both the girls.

"Well, the Parson saw it. He was down under our log and I was on top. You know, he can cut the straightest board of any in the camp. He let go of the saw and quickly walked over to the red-faced man.

"'You'll give the boys back their saw frame,' he said, 'and find some other location.'

"The big fellow looked at him in wonder. 'Who the —— are you?' he asked. 'Are you the captain of the Mounted Police?'

"'No,' said the Parson, 'but I don't propose to see the boys trampled upon by a bully. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. What sort of a coward are you to pick upon boys like that?'

"The big fellow's face got redder than ever. 'I'll show you what sort of a coward I am!' And he shed his mackinaw and came at the Parson."

"And where were you all this time?" asked Mrs. Randall severely.

"By that time I had got down off the frame and up to the group that was gathering," answered the lawyer. "'Let me take him, Dominie,' I said. 'Remember you're a man of peace. I'll enjoy giving the bully a licking!'

"But the Parson said, 'You can hold my coat, Walter, and take care of this man's partner if he butts in.'

"And then he proceeded to give the big fellow the

neatest and most artistic thrashing I ever witnessed. Oh, it was beautiful! He did it so easy! The fellow weighed fifty pounds more than the Parson, but that extra fifty pounds was just in his way. He was simply pudding for the Dominie. His big whirlwind blows were parried, and then the Parson got in a lick on the point of his chin and over he went. The fellow was a lumberman and evidently expected the usual lumberman's tramping on his face, for he put his arms over it."

"Bully for our Parson!" shouted Long Sandy. "Did that end it?"

"No," answered Walters, "we thought it would, but to the surprise of the group the Parson said, 'Stand back and let him get up and try it again.'

"The bully came with more caution this time, but in half a minute was down again. This time he lay there. The Parson stood looking at him a minute with a queer smile on his face. Then he went over to him and helped him up to a sitting posture; and then he gave him what I think was about the neatest little sermon on square dealing and kindness to the weak I ever heard. The man's face was bleeding, and he neatly tied it up with his own handkerchief; then he helped the boys repair the damage and went back to his saw."

"Do you think the brute will waylay him and take advantage of him?" asked Schofield.

"I don't think so," said Walters. "The man walked away as meek as Moses, and I heard him asking who the Parson was. When he found he had been licked by a preacher he was dumfounded. He let

out a big oath and walked away. I think he got his lesson all right. I'd hate to get such a punch as the Dominie gave him."

"What a jolly scrap!" cried Viva. "I wish I had seen it. It seems that this is a land of *men.* I've got the biggest of them all"—and she squeezed Long Sandy's arm. "But the Parson's a close second."

"Why didn't you bring the boys along?" asked the motherly Mrs. Randall. And just then the Parson came in, and at his heels the slim boys.

"Hurrah for the Fighting Parson!" shouted Schofield, and the hands clapped.

"Now, don't add to my shame," pleaded the Parson. "Walter, you rascal! What outrageous yarn have you been spinning? I had to perform a very disagreeable duty—that was all. Let me present my young friends."

The College Boys grinned sheepishly at Walters, blushed with pleasure and embarrassment at their introduction to the girls, winked at Fatty as he came in with the ambrosial Duck Mulligan, and settled down to a hilarious dinner.

Scotty's pompous tone as he opened the session of the Clan after the meal was hardly in keeping with his appearance and attitude as he sat on a low box of condensed milk, crouched forward, head between shoulders, his arms around his knees, which were almost as high as his head.

"Ladies an' gentlemen, and lassies and lads," he began, "we are met together on this propitious—I mean suspicious—no, no—er—auspicious (why dinna ye help a body out, Meenister?)—auspicious occasion,

to—to protract—er—er—transact—any affairs—er—er—business (losh, but I'm daft the nicht!) that may expire—transpire—I mean, come before ye. Now get busy. Visitors will stay where ye are." The Clan applauded.

"Highland Chief," said the Parson from his seat on a stump which had been enclosed in the tent, "I don't know of any business except the reception of new members. Schofield, read the constitution."

When this was done the Parson resumed: "I wish to present the name of our sweet little friend and mascot, Kitty."

Amid the chorus of "ayes" little Kitty, snuggling close to Viva on a blanket and blushing with confusion, murmured, "I'm not fit; but you're helping me to forget."

"Forgetting the things that are behind," quoted Scotty. "A fine motto. But I'm thinkin' you've less to forget than any of us, my bonnie lassie."

Walters spoke up. He was where he most liked to be—at Viva's feet. "Why not vote in the five College Boys at once and let one motto do for the bunch?" And it was done to the visible pride and pleasure of the three present.

Fatty Lee, being called on for a speech and motto, responded in a neat though rather sophomoric effort, accepting with gratitude, etc. At the end he said, "I might as well confess that we intended to apply for membership in the Clan, and selected the motto which is especially difficult for me, with my short legs and short wind—'Mush on!'"

"We thought if we could stand Fatty's mush we

could get away with any other kind," said one of the boys, blushing red as he spoke.

"Well, I'll have a pot of beans ready for you all when you come to Dawson," Mrs. Schofield said. "Uncle Sandy, you are the only one who knows the Yukon River; tell us what is going to happen to us."

"Nothing bad will happen to you if you use common sense," the old miner answered. "First you have this string of long, narrow lakes with small streams connecting them—Bennett, Tagish and Marsh. Then a larger river, in the middle of which are the most dangerous rapids—three of them together: Miles Canyon, Squaw Rapid and Whitehorse. I've shot them so often I have no fear of them—I like them.

"Ten miles below Whitehorse is the largest lake of all—Lebarge, thirty miles long. Then a continuous rapid called Thirty Mile River. There are no very dangerous rapids beyond, Five Fingers and Rink being the worst. You'll get through all right if you hurry. From Fort Selkirk at the mouth of the Pelly the Yukon is large and clear of rocks."

"Auld Lang Syne" was the song with which the meeting closed, it being sung by the members standing in a circle with hands joined, moving rapidly around, the young men contending for the hands of the girls, but Walters, by reason of his size and strength, easily taking his place by the side of Viva.

The week that followed was a strenuous one at Lakes Linderman and Bennett. The sound of axes, saws and hammers was heard on all sides from dawn to dusk; and even at night by the light of blazing logs the whipsawing went on. This mob of tenderfeet

was dauntlessly facing the unknown and preparing for it. The many who had never whipsawed a board or built a boat or navigated a stream or a lake were carefully watching the few who had done these things and imitating their actions. Of course most of these boats were awkward and unmanageable—some of them mere boxes, liable to dip and fill with water or smash upon the rocks. That so many of them got to Dawson speaks volumes for the courage and resourcefulness of the men who made and traveled in them. They were putting out from Bennett every day, scores of them, the crowds on shore waving them Godspeed and then turning to their own tasks with fiercer energy than ever.

Schofield left the morning after the Clan conclave with his wife and the T'ree Yons. Five or six other newspaper men, representing as many journals and syndicates went down the river in speedy, well-equipped boats.

The goods of the Family all arrived and the Indians were paid off and sent back happy with the Parson's blessing. Long Sandy and Viva made a three days' trip into the mountains with two Indians, and returned triumphant with a fine lot of young goat meat, and the head of the old bearded patriarch of the flock which had fallen to the girl's rifle. Uncle Sandy skinned the head and prepared the skull and sent the trophy to the Colonel at Skagway, to be forwarded to an Eastern taxidermist.

The Doctor came down the trail to Bennett, having stayed with the sick man till the end. Whisky Finnegan's scow was completed and loaded with ten

passengers and their outfits. The goods of our friends were aboard.

It was with relief and joy that, early one clear, frosty morning, the Parson grasped the long steering oar. Four great sweeps were manned by eight men. The huge square sail was in place, ready to be hoisted before a fair wind. The scow was piled high with goods, places being left clear for the sweeps. Sandy and his Family, Scotty and Walters, and the College Boys were to follow in a day or two in their lighter and speedier boats.

And so the long, exciting voyage began, the Argonauts aboard eager for the Golden Fleece. Finnegan had put aboard the scow a man designated as captain, but his entire ignorance of boat craft and his stupidity compelled the Parson and a Norwegian lumberman named Knutsen to take command and do the navigating. There were no reliable maps or charts. But little information could be gleaned of the route.

The boat was so filled with goods that there was no room for the men to cook or sleep aboard. Each outfit contained tent, stove and blankets, and the men must camp ashore every night. Discomfort, hard work and danger were before them all.

Laboring slowly down Lake Bennett, poling through the narrow Caribou Crossing, booming through the larger Lake Tagish, buffeted by the waves of Windy Arm, rushing down Tagish River, halted by the Canadian customs officers and forced to pay sums proportioned to the officers' estimate of each man's purse and "easiness," sweating at the oars through the tedious, weedy Lake Marsh, slipping swiftly down the

river again—they forged ahead, the fleets of smaller and swifter craft passing them constantly.

But the Parson enjoyed it all—the glorious weather, the brilliant sunsets and sunrises, the beautiful autumn foliage, the majestic mountains, the lovely blue lakes, the camp-fires under the fir trees, the freshness, the wildness, the freedom, the immensity of it all. He had more work to do than any other man aboard, and ashore he had to make camp alone, make every fire, cook every meal and do all the camp work, with the helpless Doctor shivering in his big coat, looking on.

But the work was an essential part of the enjoyment, and his soul communed with the grandeur around him. Most of all, the great river they were navigating appealed to his soul—its majesty, its purity, its rhythm, its mysterious sources and unmapped ways. It sang its own song to him and he put a little of it (the most of it he couldn't voice) into words. And on the river below Lake Marsh and above the Canyon, the sixth night from Bennett, when the three boats of his friends ranged alongside at sunset and they all camped together under the tall spruce trees and had a big log-cabin fire, he gave the verses to Payson, the musician, and he composed a slowly swinging boatman's tune to it, and little Kitty played the chords, and they sang it together. And from that time on during their days on the Yukon the Parson on his scow and Sandy's Family and the College Boys in their boats sang the song to the swing of their oars. The crews of other boats caught the tune and learned the words until at times for miles along the river the cliffs

reëchoed the rhythmical song. This was the first verse of this crudely interpreted Song of the Yukon:

I own no master, I go as I will;
I glide from the forest, I leap from the hill;
I wear no shackles, I turn no wheels,
But pulse with the joy pure Freedom feels.

Then, come, float, row;
No carking trouble shall harry you;
On my bosom broad I will carry you,
To maiden Nature I'll marry you;
Together we'll go;
No care shall you know,
As I flow—flow—flow.

XII

THE MAD WATER

IT was an intensely interested and in the main a wildly anxious crowd that assembled under the fir trees on the bluff above Miles Canyon. Fearsome stories, growing as they passed from man to man, of the five miles of foaming rapids—Miles Canyon, Squaw Rapid and, most dreaded of all, Whitehorse Rapid—scared the increasing mob of tenderfeet.

As the crowd gathered in the upper camp to make careful survey of the terrible five miles of river, new tales of disaster circulated among them. Five new-made graves on a mound back of the camp bore grewsome witness to the truth of the stories of wreck and death. More graves further down the river, especially below the Whitehorse, were whispered of with dread.

Professional boatmen, or men who claimed to be such, were telling of the disasters of to-day and yesterday, and inventing details when they thought it necessary to their business. The extreme peril of daring the rapids without previous experience in running them was the point most emphasized.

But these brave boatmen were offering to risk their own lives in order to safeguard boats and men, incidentally charging for conducting a boat down the

rapids a fee varying from seventy-five to two hundred and fifty dollars, according to the size of the boat and the owner's purse.

The three boats containing our friends were moored above the Canyon the same day. "Let us go and have a look at these terrible rapids, Uncle Sandy," begged Viva, and the old miner, who could deny his Lassie nothing, obediently went. He had shot these rapids many times, and was familiar with every crook and turn of them, every rock and swirl and eddy.

The Parson, Knutsen and Scotty, who were experienced in swift waters, and Walters and the College Boys, with little Kitty, who feared nothing so much as separation from Viva, went along.

Long Sandy led the way to the top of the rocks which form the eastern wall of the beautiful Miles Canyon. The basaltic walls are sculptured and columned as if by the chisels of giants. The river is compressed between these perpendicular palisades until it seems only a few yards in width, and the water leaps madly into the open jaws and roars through the tortuous channel, side currents with tips of white striking viciously out to the center here and there, from points of rock. The current here reaches out fists to buffet boats as they rush through the Canyon; but always there is deep, safe water in the center, if only one can keep in the current.

"What do you think of it, Lassie?" asked Sandy, as the girl skipped along the edge of the cliff, scanning the river with experienced eye.

"This part doesn't look at all bad to me," she replied. "I have shot far worse rapids than this in

my canoe on the Kootenai and the upper reaches of the Yellowstone. If you keep your boat pointed with the current it can't strike the sides of the Canyon. See how the water piles up against the cliff? And the river is deep here—no rocks near the surface."

As they looked a boat came shooting down the Canyon at railroad speed. There were three men in it—two at the oars and one steering. As they came around a turn and the boat seemed rushing toward the cliff, one of the men, overcome with fear, dropped his oars and started toward the stern. The roaring water drowned all sound of the voices, but the steersman was evidently shouting orders and probably swearing at the panic-stricken man. One of the oars dropped into the river, and the other locked in the wooden tholepins and the blade caught the current, causing the boat to veer dangerously. It was only by tremendous efforts that the other oarsman and the pilot were able to keep the boat headed down the river.

"See that?" said Scotty. "The lad lost his head and pretty near wrecked the boat. A fool in the boat is more dangerous than the rapids."

They walked on down past the Canyon to the Squaw Rapid, where the river widens out and roars over and among thousands of rocks and bowlders.

"This is a more dangerous place than the Canyon," said Sandy; "there are so many channels. But if you leave the mouth of the Canyon in the center of the current and follow it down here to the right, and then to the left yonder across the river, there will be no trouble."

The remains of a scow impaled on a rock in mid-channel showed where five men had lost their lives three days ago. They had evidently fled Scylla to find and be wrecked by Charybdis.

Four miles down the river from the head of Miles Canyon they came in sight of the most dreaded rapid of all.

" I see now why that is called Whitehorse Rapid," said Walters; for the great leaping and foaming waves in the narrow channel resembled nothing so much as madly galloping white horses, tossing snowy manes and tails as they raced wildly through the gorge.

They walked down the rocks till they stood by the whitest water—a churning yeast of foam.

" It looks angry," said Viva, screaming to make herself heard; " but if one steers right into the middle of the foam he'll get through all right. The water is deep where it is whitest."

" You have the right idea, Lassie," shouted Sandy. " The boats have been wrecked here because the men in them feared the white water, and pulled into the dark places at the sides where the rocks are. The best way to lay ghosts like this is to go right at them when they wave their white arms."

A boat came charging down the rapid as they stood looking. The four men in it evidently knew their business, for there were two strong men at the oars pulling hard for steerageway, while a man at the bow and another in the stern worked steering oars. They kept in the current, but just in the foamiest place an oar snapped and the boat turned clear around. It shot the rapid safely, but shipped a ton of water.



"I SEE NOW WHY THAT IS CALLED WHITEHORSE RAPID"

"It all depends upon the slap of the moment whether you make a wet or dry passage," said Sandy. "I've come through here dry as a bone; and again the waves have dashed right over us. The surges are like sparring schoolboys; you don't know where they will strike."

Viva glanced at the faces of her companions. Two of the College Boys had gone white at the thought of trusting their lives to the foaming torrent.

As they took the trail back to camp they met files of men with packs on their backs, carrying goods to the foot of the rapids to lighten their boats for the passage.

"Isn't it fun!" exclaimed Viva. "I wouldn't have missed this for anything. I'll steer the boat down the rapids, Uncle Sandy, with you at the oars."

"No!" shouted Walters and the College Boys in instant protest.

But Long Sandy said, "That you shall, my Lassie. I'd rather trust you at the rudder than any of these self-styled 'river pilots.' 'River pirates,' I call them. I'll tell you what we'll do. May and Kitty can take Brutus and Cassius, each dog with a pack on his back, down the trail to the foot of the rapids. That will lighten our load five or six hundred pounds. Then you and I will take the boat through flying."

"Oh, Viva," pleaded Kitty, almost crying, "please let me go with you in the boat. I feel safer with you in the rapids than with any one else on the land."

"All right, Mousie," laughed Viva, hugging her, "you shall come along and help me with the steering oar."

"I am somewhat anxious about our big scow," said the Parson to Long Sandy. "Our Captain is absolutely worthless. Knutsen and I are the only ones who know anything of rivercraft, and neither of us knows these rapids. The 'pilots' at the camp want two hundred dollars to take us down the rapids, and we don't trust them. If we only had somebody like yourself to take the stern sweep with me, and let Knutsen manage the one in the bow, with four of the strongest men at the oars and the rest packing loads along the trail, I think we'd make it in safety."

"Very well," assented Sandy. "I'll take you down first and come back for our boat."

"What would you advise us to do?" asked Payson earnestly. "We are up against it. We have an awkward boat and none of us knows how to manage it. The load is too heavy. We were almost wrecked once in the river above here. And we're dead broke, and these pirates want a hundred dollars for taking our boat past the Whitehorse."

"Let me pilot you," said Viva eagerly. "I've done things like that lots of times. Set a thousand pounds of your stuff ashore to lighten the boat. Then let these two boys"—pointing to those whose faces had blanched—"and Fatty Lee begin to pack it down the trail. You, Payson and Saunders, will take the oars and pull as I direct you by nodding my head. Will you trust me?"

"Miss Viva," said Payson earnestly, "I would rather intrust you with my life than anybody else in the world." There was a deeper meaning to his words

which Walters caught, but to which the girl seemed entirely oblivious.

"It's all settled, then," she said. "Uncle Sandy and I will take your boats down to-morrow morning early, and walk back for ours."

And so they did. After an early breakfast the river pilots, hovering about the boats in hope of fat jobs, saw with astonishment and with head-shakings and prophecies of dire disaster, a slim young girl, dressed in a short corduroy suit and boyish cap, assume command of a large but rather awkwardly built boat, issue her orders as to putting ashore a portion of the goods and the proper disposal of the rest so as to balance the boat; and then with entire confidence and self-possession take her place at the helm, with two stout young men at the oars and the inseparable Kitty at her feet as self-constituted bailer, and push off into the raging torrent, without, as one of them said, "batting an eyelash."

The scow, with the Parson and Uncle Sandy at the steering sweep, got off first; then Scotty and Walters, and Viva and her crew last.

Two hours later the two lassies came joyfully back to the upper camp with Uncle Sandy, Walters and the two collegians, the Parson having stayed at the lower camp to look after the comfort of Auntie May when she should arrive. Somehow the comfort of Auntie May seemed to demand more and more of the Parson's time and attention as the days advanced.

"We got through beautifully," exulted Viva. "We didn't ship a bucketful of water. I'd like to shoot the Whitehorse every day."

When questioned about the adventure Payson laughed: "Indeed, I never saw the rapids at all. I was too busy watching the nods to right and left of Miss Carroll's head and pulling for dear life as she directed."

While Uncle Sandy and his girls were preparing their own boat for the venture, a handsome young man with silky black beard, black hair and eyes approached, hat in hand.

"I beg youah pahdon, suh, foh the intrusion," he said to Long Sandy, "but I have the honah of addressing the uncle of the lady who deservedly rebuked me for my abuse of my hawses at Skagway."

While Uncle Sandy slowly pondered this queer address, Viva came frankly forward and gave the stranger her hand.

"Why, Mr. Carter, I didn't know you in your whiskers. When did you come to camp?"

"Last evening, Miss—er—Miss?"

"Carroll," prompted the girl. "I have been wishing to see you and apologize for not coming to your camp as I promised and teaching you men the diamond hitch. I had very important business," and she smiled upon Kitty.

"The whole camp rang with your heroic deed," he said. "I came ovah to your camp, but you had retired. I hope you have forgiven me foh the hawses."

"Oh, that's all past and forgotten," she said. Then, with a critical glance at his loaded boat and the two men in it, "Are you going to shoot the rapids now?"

"We ah about to make the attempt."

"Aren't you rather heavily loaded?"

"I think not," he answered. "You see, Miss Carroll, we ah in a desperate hurry. We were detained so long by the blockade that we ah traveling day and night. My German pahtneh, heah, has a chance of making all ouah fohtunes, which we will lose if we ah not in Dawson by Octobah first."

"You are taking chances, that way," warned Sandy, looking them over.

"We have to, suh," replied the Southerner, preparing to cast off the line.

"Wait just a minute, Uncle Sandy," called Viva as the old miner was getting ready to do the same thing with his boat. Opening a warbag she took out a mysterious package, and opening it displayed a beautiful braided lariat. Fastening the end to a cleat in the bow, she deftly coiled the line on the tarpaulin-covered goods in the bow, and adjusted the loop for instant use.

"No knowing what may happen," she said. "I saw a boat nearly wrecked yesterday."

One of the pilots came down to the Southerner's boat with a proffer of his services.

"No money, suh," was Carter's curt reply; and the heavy boat pushed out into the current, the German steering, the Cockney and the Southerner at the oars.

Sandy's boat was not two minutes behind it, but it was just disappearing into the mouth of the Canyon when Viva caught the current.

The girl was standing erect on the stern platform, alert and jubilant, with the handle of the steering oar in her hands, Kitty on the other side of it, ready

to help in case of need. Old Sandy wielded the oars with iron sinews and perfect knowledge, and he and his Lassie moved with such unanimity that they seemed to have but one will.

Rushing and swinging through the Canyon and taking successfully its buffetings, they came again in sight of the Southerner's boat just entering the tumultuous Squaw Rapid. Sandy was pulling steadily and strongly to give his Lassie good steerageway. He was gaining on the heavier boat.

"They are too far to the left!" screamed Viva, and Sandy with a glance over his shoulder nodded assent.

Again the tossing breakers hid the other boat. Emerging from the broken reaches of Squaw Rapid, they saw it not far ahead just snatched into the mighty grasp of the swooping torrent at the head of the Whitehorse.

Suddenly Sandy, watching Viva, saw her face convulsed with horror, and glancing ahead saw the catastrophe. Going like an express train, the heavily laden boat had just touched the jagged edge of rock that shelves out almost to the middle of the compressed river, and instantly dissolved, as if it were made of sugar, and disappeared.

Her own boat, just then received into the tossing mane of the mad Whitehorse, required all of Viva's attention and strength. The tossing, surging waves were like a mob of fighting men striking at each other's heads. The bow of the boat was snatched hither and thither as if in the grasp of a raging giant. When she emerged safely from the smother of foam she could see at first no sign of the wrecked boat. She saw a

crowd of men running down the rounded rocks that rim the Whitehorse.

Suddenly she saw a head shoot up from the water, and the splintered end of a section of the boat. It was a little in front of her and to one side. Jamming her steering oar hard down and nodding to Sandy, she screamed in Kitty's ear, "Hold it that way!" The child rose to the occasion heroically and exerted more strength than she had ever known before, her feet braced against the side of the boat. Old Sandy was pulling strongly, and the boat was more responsive now.

Placing her hands on his shoulder, she vaulted his oars and leaped to the bow. Her experience with bucking bronchos stood her in good stead. She reached her lariat and gathered and swung it. The head was visible now, close in front, and an arm desperately clutching the board. A white face turned toward her with the churning water.

"Put up your arm!" she screamed, shooting her own left arm high. Up went the man's arm, and down over it and his head on the instant descended the loop. As the rope tightened she eased it on the cleat, paying it out till the strain slackened, and then gathering it in with all her strength. The head was under water now, but as she hauled on the line it came up again and a hand clutched blindly the side of the boat.

Holding the lariat tight on the cleat, Viva nodded to Kitty, who helped Sandy swing the boat shoreward, and presently, in the little eddy below all the rapids, kindly hands lifted the unconscious man ashore, and

helped the exhausted heroines and hero to their tent.

It was the Parson who took charge of the rescued man, and the little Doctor who used all the means at his command to restore him. He was Carter, the Southerner. His head was gashed and bleeding in many places, and his whole body a mass of bruises.

After two hours of rubbing and dosing his eyes opened consciously upon the pitying eyes of Mrs. Randall, and roved from face to face—the Doctor, the Parson, Old Sandy, Walters, and rested at last, long and contentedly, upon the glad face of his little savior.

"What are you going to do with him?" queried the Parson, when the battered man, aided by the Doctor's medicines, had dropped into a heavy sleep.

"Why, take him along, of course," chorused Sandy and Viva and Auntie May. "He has lost everything—money, outfit, companions. He can't go back. He needs care for a long time yet."

And so Old Sandy, without a tremor of hesitation, adopted into his Family a Son.

XIII

THE ICE JAMB

"THIS has been a divil of a day," said Scotty. "We've just been knockin' an' grindin' through the ice for hours. A dozen times I thought the ice would crush us to the bottom. It's taken us two hours now to push the big cakes off an' work through them an' get ashore. I bet ye four bits if the Parson was here he'd lose some of his cheerfulness. It's bad enough, just you an' me—but him with that baby roun' his neck an' that crowd on Whisky Finnegan's scow; an' their captain never sober! Do ye think he'll keep sweet?"

"Never doubt it," replied Walters. "You can't chill the Dominie's religion with an ice-pack, or curdle the milk of human kindness in his veins by sour fortune."

"I wonder where he is now," said Scotty anxiously. "It must be four hours since we passed him, and his crew were working mighty hard to keep off the bars and stave off the ice. It's a fair hard job managing that unwieldly scow in this ice."

"I'm worrying more about Long Sandy's boat," replied Walters. "Their taking that Southern gentleman aboard was risky in more ways than one. It overloaded them and gave them another mouth to feed. They would be delayed two or three days looking for

the bodies of his partners. And now their slim, long boat is caught in the ice jamb."

"That isn't what's fashin' ye, my lad," consoled the Scotchman. "I ken well it's the Lassie. She saved his life an' ye're feared she'll fall in love wi' him. But I'm thinkin' the bonnie lassie 'll be slow lettin' her heart go to ony o' ye all. Dinna worry."

"But she saved him, and he's with her every day. See his advantage?"

"Oh, for the matter o' that," answered Scotty, "I fancy he and little Kitty are about alike wi' her; she saved 'em both."

The place was an eddy formed by a bend in the Yukon, a day's journey with the current from Fort Selkirk at the mouth of the Pelly.

"As I live," exclaimed Scotty suddenly, "there comes the scow now, trying to snub in here. Pole out a little; I'll throw them a rope. They'll never make it alone."

Scotty's boat was moored to a long line. Slacking it to give more play, the two strong men shoved out into the eddy, jabbing the ice cakes with their poles and working through them. Then Scotty, swinging a rope cowboy fashion, landed the end of it at the Parson's feet. He quickly secured it, and then the whole company of ten men on the scow began to work it ashore, some pulling on the rope, others pushing off the crushing cakes of ice. The snow was falling thick and the night was dark as pitch, except where the lanterns glowed on scow and boat. The ice from the Pelly charged against them like battering rams, grinding and crushing. It was slow and heavy work.

"Ease up now," shouted Scotty, "or you will be breaking the rope and then we're all gone. Keep your poles on the bottom. Now, men, all together. Work those cakes of ice along the end of the scow, Parson. You strong man in the stern with your gum boots, jump overboard. There, hold on like grim death. Now the shore's clear; bring her in."

And the weary company, who had all, with the exception of the little Doctor, been working since daylight, moored the scow to the trees on the bank and came ashore.

"Where are the spruce trees?" growled Shorty, a man of squatty stature, a wonderful combination of strange oaths and a big heart.

"There's nothing but willows for a mile around," said Walters, "and we'll have to do the best we can on the bare ground. Doesn't this beat the limit, Dominie?"

"Oh, no," replied the Parson cheerfully, "we're far from the limit; plenty of food and blankets, wood for a big camp-fire and a fine company of good fellows, what more could you want? Comfort is a very relative thing, but every camp is as you make it. The glorious display we have each night of the Aurora has warmed and thrilled me all day. I couldn't keep cold after such visions as those! Bring the blankets and I'll carry the mess-box and tent. We'll cook over an open fire."

"You'd better put your boarder to bed without his supper," shouted Shorty. "He hasn't earned his grub to-day. I wish you'd turn him over to me!"

"Never mind, Shorty," said the Parson good-natur-

edly, " we'll have enough for us two, and for you also if you'll eat with us."

" Thank you," said Shorty. " Me and Pete have some beans left and you must be tired. Fourteen hours at a stretch is enough for any man, let alone a preacher. Gosh!" he said, " I didn't think we'd make it. If you hadn't known something about rivers and ice we'd of been gone on that last sandbar. If you keep on doing things like that you'll make converts of the lot of us before we get to Dawson, eh, Pete?"

" I'll have to have a crack at the drunken fool of a captain before I'm converted," said Pete.

The Parson was weary. He had been doing the work of three men without cessation all day, and now it was ten o'clock. In a willow swamp, with the snow lying thick on the ground and festooning every bush, it was no pleasant matter to make camp. The Doctor, wrapped up in his big overcoat, stood helplessly alongside, while the Parson, shedding his, applied the ax with lusty strokes.

" Kick off the snow from the open space there," said the Parson to the Doctor. " You can do that much. Now, boys, here's a race as to who can make a fire the quickest and get the coffee pot boiling."

Threshing the snow from dry willow twigs and crushing little bunches of them in their hands, Scotty and the Parson outdistanced the others, with that sure instinct for kindling which is more a matter of natural woodcraft than of experience. Almost at the same time little tongues of flame began to rise and hiss in the snow. Placing green logs with stones under them for air, and piling the dry sticks up log-house

fashion, then rushing with coffee pots to the margin of the river in friendly rivalry, Scotty and the Parson set forth steaming cups of strong coffee with warmed beans and sizzling bacon before the Doctor and Walters.

"You win," said the Parson.

"Yes," said Scotty; "I had a partner with some savvy; it's no credit of mine."

Appetites satisfied, then to pitch the tents. Selecting the sturdiest bushes with a clear space between, the tents were stretched.

"It's going to be a hard bed," said the Parson. "You'll miss the spruce boughs to-night. I dislike to turn in and leave this cheery fire."

The other men, with hunger appeased, gathered around the Parson's fire on boxes, tarpaulins and logs, swapping experiences and commenting on the dangers and discomforts of the day.

"I wonder what became of the College Boys?" said the Parson. "I fear for those fine fellows. They don't know how to steer a boat in the current, and the last I saw of them, twenty miles back, they were on a bar with the ice piling up on them."

As if in answer to his anxious question, far out on the blackness of the stream came floating faintly a lusty song, the Parson's song of the Yukon—"Then come, float, row!"

"Those are my College Boys, sure," said the Parson.

After piling on the fire armfuls of dry sticks, he rushed to the shore and lifted his voice in a sturdy halloo. Walters fired his rifle. They were answered from half a dozen boats, some close by, some far off.

"Get into this eddy," the Parson shouted. "Point your boats up against the stream and land here; there's a dangerous rapid below."

Scotty, Walters and two or three other men ran up the bank of the river hallooing and directing the weary boatmen, and before an hour had passed some fifty men were gathered around the hospitable fire of the Parson. With Scotty helping him, he made a fresh batch of camp bread in frying-pans, standing the flat loaves on edge in front of the fire to bake. A big kettleful of rice with raisins stirred in it was served with canned milk; but, first of all, a cup of hot beef tea made of beef extract was handed to each.

"We were all in when we saw your fire," said Payson, "and about ready to let the ice take us where it would. I am afraid for old Sandy and the ladies. I believe we saw them just before dark, away behind us. Their boat is thin, and the Southerner was so bruised and used up that he'll not be of much use."

"Doggone him, anyhow!" grumbled Fatty Lee, who was turning around and around before the fire, oozing steam and perspiration, and mopping his head with a flowing bandanna. "Here's the whole bunch of us fellows dead in love with Miss Viva and fighting for the chance of getting a word or look from her, and along comes this handsome Frenchified fellow from the Sunny South and wrecks his boat before her eyes, and gets her to rope him and save his life, and then adopt him and take him in her boat like she did little Kitty. What chance have we now, I'd like to know? He has the inside track. It's no fair!"

"Don't you be scared about the safety of that out-

fit," said Scotty. "That's the finest boat on the river, with two of the best boatmen in the country, Sandy and the Lassie, to handle her. We'll keep up this fire for a couple of hours more. Keep shooting yer gun, Walters. They may come in yet."

And, sure enough, soon an answering double report boomed across the water.

"That's Miss Viva's shotgun," shouted Walters, recklessly using up his rifle cartridges in response.

There was great excitement. "Lend me your ropes, some of you men," cried Scotty.

There was a willing compliance. The Scotchman knotted three ropes together, tied an end to the stern of his boat, put the rope in the hands of Shorty and Pete with instructions to pay it out as needed; and then with the experienced Norwegian, Knutsen, pushed off into the thickening jamb of ice, a lantern in the bow and a rope ready to throw to the incoming boat.

The College Boys piled branches on the blaze, the Parson and Fatty Lee went to cooking again; and soon out on the river gleamed another light; the two lanterns came together, Scotty's command to "Haul in!" was responded to sturdily by the men on shore, and, slowly struggling through the ice, Scotty and Knutsen plying their poles in one boat, and Sandy, Viva and Carter in the other, the *Lassie* with its precious freight was hauled ashore.

"I never was so glad to get out of a boat in all my life," exclaimed Viva, shaking hands all around and making Brutus and Cassius do the same. "You have saved us from a dreary night on the river."

Willing hands got the baggage ashore and pitched the tents of the late comers; hot beef tea and a bounteous supper warmed and cheered their hearts, and, despite the cheerless camping place and the thickly falling snow, comfort and content soon prevailed.

When the ladies had gone to their tent one of the boys started up a song then in vogue: " Doris, Doris, O how I love you!" he wailed.

"Cut it out!" shouted a comrade, and when no other means availed he crushed the plaintive sentiment completely by another song, then new: " There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night."

It was two o'clock ere the Parson sought his couch, for a pot of beans must be cooked ready for the morrow. The tarpaulins were spread on the snowy ground and the blankets laid, two pair under and two pair over them; and the Parson fell almost instantly asleep. Into his dreams melted again the voice of a wailing child, and he awoke with the Doctor weeping aloud.

"What is it now?" asked the Parson, who could not keep a touch of impatience from his voice.

"I'll die of pneumonia," bawled the Doctor. "The cold is striking right up through the blankets. I can't stand it. I'll die!"

"Here, put my coat under you next to the blankets. There, now, go to sleep!"

He wrapped his own side of the blankets about himself and again fell into unconsciousness.

A second time he was awakened. The little Doctor was crying again, amid Gaelic exclamations from Scotty which sounded very much like profanity.

The Parson patiently asked once more, "What's the matter now?"

"My feet!" said the Doctor. "I can't get to sleep; my feet are freezing; it makes them a-a-ache!"

"How many pairs of socks have you on?" inquired the Parson.

"Two-oo," sobbed the Doctor.

"Well," said the Parson, "I have the same. Do you want mine?"

"Oh, yes, if you don't mind."

That was too much for Shorty, whose tent was close by, and his string of oaths made the Parson speak up quickly:

"Stop, Shorty, for the sake of your mother!"

Then to the Doctor: "Here, take this one pair and pull them over your feet." And again he lay down by the side of the sniffling baby.

Scotty in Gaelic and Shorty in lurid English were giving vent to their feelings, but Long Sandy, without a word, came silently to the Parson's tent and passed in to him a woolen mackinaw and warm woolen socks and went as silently away.

"God bless you!" exclaimed the Parson. "There is a true man of the wilderness," he mused. "He has been so long in the kindly heart of Nature that he does big things naturally without making any fuss about it." And soon he was asleep again.

XIV

THE AURORA

THE morning saw the camp completely shut in by the ice. The big cakes jammed together so closely that some of them stood on end and presented almost a solid front. It was impossible to launch the boats. For half a mile up and down the river the great eddy, silent, except for a little grinding and nodding, presented an impassable barrier.

"We'll have to stay here to-day," said Sandy; "perhaps two or three days. The Pelly will be freezing solid soon. This first thick run of ice will slacken and then the eddy will clear away."

"That's fine!" said the Parson. "This is Sunday and the good Lord designs to give us all a rest. Here, you College Boys, get busy and let us make a meeting house. It has stopped snowing and there's no grander cathedral anywhere. Those birches are the colonnades; these gnarled cottonwood branches are the fretwork of the ceiling, and with the wind for the soprano and the ice the bass we have a splendid choir. We'll have a meeting and let Nature preach to us the finest sermon in the world!"

"You'll have to assist Nature a little bit, Dominie," said Payson, who was a fine, clean-featured young man of twenty. "This is too good a chance to miss. For once Shorty and Pete will have to hear a sermon.

They can't escape this time without going out into the cold."

"Well, then," assented the Parson, "build up a big fire and prop this long tarpaulin at our backs so as to reflect the heat. Make yourselves as comfortable as possible, for I am fairly boiling over with the lesson God taught me at Lake Lebarge as we floated all night under the starry sky."

"This is as near heaven as I expect ever to get!" said Shorty. "It sure was a bit of hell out there in the black river."

"If you can find any lesson of cheer in an experience like this," said Pete, "I'll follow you to the end of the trail."

The camp buzzed with interest. Church service in the snow, among the willows, was a novelty. About half of the company of fifty were members of some church somewhere, and the novelty attracted the rest. Long Sandy's tents sent the three women, all coming joyfully, and Kitty proudly took her place at the baby organ, which had been brought from the scow.

Carter's head was still bandaged and his eyes blackened, but he was rapidly recovering his strength. He was never far from Auntie May, who scolded him and fussed over him after the manner of aunties with sick boys to tend.

The congregation brought their own seats with them, boxes, sacks and warbags supplying the need.

"Cheerful songs now, boys," said the Parson, handing around the little red hymn books and swinging into "The Morning Light Is Breaking." The Scripture lesson was a song of exultation; the prayer

a conversation, it seemed, with a Person very near, so intimate, so simple, that Shorty involuntarily opened his eyes and looked around to see who the Parson was talking with. Then another hymn was sung with a will, and afterward the Parson spoke:

"This is not *my* sermon, boys, and you have had the text in that wonderful night. You remember how it was! Why, if God should give us nothing else in this great plunge into the wilderness, nothing of gold but the golden memory of that night, we are rich men all our lives.

"Early in the evening we saw the low dark arch spanning the northern horizon. So dense was it that we said it was a bank of cloud, until we saw the stars winking brightly through it. It was more than dark; it was jet-black, as if the sky were painted and the stars were simply holes through its velvety folds into a brightness beyond.

"As we watched that awesome darkness we saw, yonder to the east, a faint streamer of light, then another and then another; east and west, higher and higher, they climbed toward the zenith, and began to flash, as if signaling to one another across the darkness. The penumbra sat still in the North as if it welcomed the light.

"But that light increased, climbing higher and higher, flashing more and more brilliantly, growing red in the East and violet in the West. And now the darkness seemed to awake to its danger, and to rally its forces as if to battle with the light. From the East a wave of darkness, curling over like a wave of the sea, swept silently and majestically to the West;

and then a return wave, more rapid and violent in its motion and with menacing starts and gestures, swept to the East; until presently these great masses of jet blackness were charging and recharging across the heavens in wonderful and fierce commotion, as if they would annihilate the light.

" But ever the light increased. The war was on! The hosts of heaven were marshaled. Flashing higher and higher toward the zenith, spreading farther and farther east and west, presently we had not only Northern lights, but Western and Eastern and Southern lights, and the whole horizon was ringed with glory.

" Now that light began to take strange shapes and motions. Those many-colored streamers, flashing clear across the horizon, dissolved into sparkling showers. It was as if the Almighty had taken a handful of glory-sparkles and thrown them against the heavens as the sower sows his seed. Now they were detached shafts of light, as if a shower of brazen arrows from a thousand bows, chasing each other fiercely across the sky.

" Now the light bent up until you could fairly see an opening into the towers and battlements and minarets of the Celestial City! Now wondrous shapes as of soldiers and horses and chariots and charging armies, all panoplied in light!

" The squadrons of darkness loomed forty degrees in height, and grew ever fiercer and blacker, hurling themselves forward, until they would be overwhelmed and beaten back by the charging glory. It was Milton's 'Battle in Heaven' over again; swords and spears and chariots of fire, striking, flashing, driving

furiously; shields of blackness pierced by flashing spears; hills and mountains hurled across the plain.

" But always the light increased, and began first to subdue the darkness and then to fairly melt it into the glow. A wonderful feather of white light, pure and delicate, as if from the wing of God, was drawn across the heavens. Up from all points of the horizon the flashing streamers of many-colored light stretched higher and higher to the zenith. The wand of the angel seemed to bend around until it united with the many-colored flashing streamers; and we saw them meet at last above our heads in a perfect circle of all the rainbow colors and of marvelous brilliance, a crown of glory in the heavens.

" Within that wondrous circle seemed almost another penumbra, with the stars shining brightly through it. And as we looked and wondered and praised—for who could sleep on a night like that?—we thought to follow the streamers back to the Northland and see what had become of the armies of darkness; and, lo! the darkness had disappeared, and the light had gained the victory!

" Friends, you need no application. It is God's picture to you of the darkness of ignorance, superstition and fear that rested upon and enveloped this Northland so long—an Egyptian 'darkness that could be felt.' And that other darkness in so many hearts that has its elements to-day in these men mad with gold-lust, hardened, selfish, fiends of cruelty, ready to murder even themselves in their haste to get rich. All other shadows of lust and drunkenness and impurity in the hearts of so many. The powers

of hell are turned loose in this great wilderness; as many as the devils that pursued St. Anthony into the wilderness, an umbra of darkness and sin. I needn't describe it. Kipling seems sometimes to be right, and 'God isn't found north of fifty-three.'

"But oh, boys, there's the light! The Light that shineth upon every man; it is never asleep. It 'shines in the darkness and the darkness comprehends it not.' Men turn their eyes inward, not outward, to the Light; but it is there and it shines; its shafts strike into the darkness.

"'The angels of God encamp around about the dwelling of the just,' even though that dwelling is a log shack or a tent in the snow. The hosts of Light are braver and more insistent than those of Darkness. 'More are those that are with us than those against us.' To love the light is natural, and sin is against Nature; and to this Northland, to the natives in their superstition, to the white men in their more deadly lust for gold, come the armies of God.

"The battle is on! To him who is on the side of the Light there can be no defeat. The old-timer or the tenderfoot who keeps his heart of a child and is kind and helpful has a glory within that *will* shine forth. This is going to be Emanuel's land, boys! The good in these men who seem so hard now is going to triumph; courage, kindness, sympathy, charity, love—these are going to be the rules of the Northland. God sets His promise high; there in the darkness shines the light of natural nobility; and God has set for us in that glorious vision His promise of a time not far off when this rugged land will be a land of desire, a land of homes,

a land of women's sweet voices and of childish laughter; a land of love and a land of peace. Fall into the ranks, men. Fight on the side of the light!"

The Parson ceased and stood looking into the fire with that far-seeing, other-worldly look on his face. Silence fell on the crowd. After a while old Sandy said softly, "I've often had that sermon preached to me, only I couldn't put it in words before."

Shorty and Pete looked at each other, then looked away again, self-conscious, and silently walked to their tent. Scotty, as usual, quoted Scripture: "The words of the wise are like apples of gold in pictures of silver," while Walters, with eyes suffused, walked away by himself. One by one the College Boys came up and said simply, "Thank you, Parson."

And then the service, if service it could be called, so little was there in it that was formal, closed by the young men breaking out with one accord: "On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand."

No one ever forgot the Parson's sermon. Only the little Doctor, self-centered and unseeing, resentful, as if the sermon had been preached at himself, went grumbling to his blankets. But Walters, seeing often the glory of the North-light, never twice alike and always telling a new and wondrous story, got a better conception of that Love above all other loves, that makes not only the world but the worlds go round.

The joy of the family was unbounded. Kitty sat at the organ nearly all day, and Viva and the College Boys hovered about it, singing this and that—not always songs out of the little red book. But all, from "Come Back to Erin" and "Highland Mary" to

the latest sentimental tune, seemed appropriate to-day.

The men of the scow and the other stranded stampeders joined in the songs they knew, as they puttered around the camp-fire, cooking, drying clothes, mending sacks—the hundred and one things always to be done in a camp.

Carter, the rescued Southerner, sought the Parson for a confidential talk. "I wish to express my gratitude, suh, foh your interpretation of God's message in the Aurora. I have been feeling discouraged, defeated, down and out. The loss of my pahtnahs and our whole outfit makes me a beggah, suh—nothing but a beggah. Suh, we Cahtehs are a proud family. Our fortunes were ruined by the wah. We are poor. But, suh, never until now have I been forced to accept any favoh that I could not repay. And now, to be thrown, helpless, on the charity of strangehs—it is hahd, suh, hahd."

"You do our friends wrong," replied the Parson, "if you think of this simple and natural kindness they have shown you as a charity. Why, they are the happiest people I know; and their happiness consists in helping others. They actually consider that you have done them a kindness in accepting theirs—that they are your debtors. Do not wound them by harping on your rescue."

"You are right, suh," said the young man; "they are altogether wonderful. Why, Uncle Sandy actually wanted me to take five hundred dollahs 'to keep him from spending it foolishly.'

"But Miss Viva, suh, I can't talk about her. There

never was another such in all God's creation. I have no hope of her evah thinking of me as anything more than a friend. She seems more like one of God's bright angels than a woman. But I love her, suh, with my whole heart and soul. I have loved her evah since she rebuked me for my treatment of the hawses. I dreamed of doing her some great favoh, perhaps rescuing her from danger. And now it is she who has saved me at the great risk of her own life! What I want to ask you, suh, is, what should I do? Should I leave them when we get to Dawson and labor to repay them for what they have spent upon me?"

"By no means," said the Parson. "Take the place they offer you as one of the Family, and do what you can to make them comfortable and happy. As to loving Viva, you are not alone in that. All of these young men, especially Walters, are hard hit. Don't pester the child by making love to her. If I read her rightly, her heart has never been awakened. She looks upon you all as brothers and comrades. The darkness you will have to fight, my boy, is your pride. Just you be a big brother to these girls, a helpful nephew to Mrs. Randall and a faithful grandson to Long Sandy, and be so good a lover to Viva that you will not complain or be unhappy wherever her affections may finally be placed."

"Thank you, suh," said the young man, "and God help me to be a man."

"Amen," responded the Parson.

The members of the Clan, into which Carter had been tacitly received, all dined to-day in Auntie May's

tent, that good lady, with Fatty Lee's assistance, acting as cook, and each outfit providing its share of the food; then another general " sing " around the camp-fire, an excursion to the nearest spruce trees for bed material, an early retirement and a long, sweet sleep.

The second day thereafter the ice slackened in the Yukon, the jamb in the eddy cleared, the boats were launched, and, fighting the ice in the river, avoiding sandbars, and laboring at the oars, they came at last to the promised land of gold.

XV

THE STRUGGLE OF FIRST THINGS

IT was the second week in October—when the scow in which were the Parson and the Doctor approached Dawson. They had been traveling two months, and it was nearly a month since they had left Bennett.

The snubbing-in began a mile above the landing against a six-mile current. The weary voyagers, with rough bearded faces and grimy hands, with eager eyes looking out from bushy hair, straining to catch the plan and meaning of it all—this made a picture never to be forgotten. Plowing the sweeps and stern into the shore, they shaved the point above "Louse Town," afterward more kindly named Klondike City. Just below the camp the famous little river mixed its clear waters with the muddy stream of the Yukon.

As the fierce current tore around the point and threatened to sweep the heavy scow again to mid-river, a tall man leapt lightly down the bank.

"Is that you, Parson?" he shouted. "Throw me a rope. Here, you fellows, lend a hand." And the scow was moored to the bank.

"Don't you know me?" asked the tall stranger. As the Parson struggled to call back the elusive image, he went on, "Don't you remember the piece of string

at Crater Lake? I've had a hot meal waiting for you in the tent these many days for that piece of string."

Dawson, or the beginning of it, was a mile and a half away. No bridge yet spanned the Klondike, but a ferry plied back and forth, collecting a dollar from each passenger, although the Klondike was only two or three rods wide. On the steep hill that overhung the narrow stretch of beach where the little village was built men were at work chopping timber for lumber, getting logs for their cabins, cutting firewood and sliding it down the hill. It was the Promised Land, and the Klondikers experienced something of the exultation the Pilgrims felt when they landed on the no less forbidding shores of Massachusetts. Every yard of available space was occupied by tents, interspersed with heaps of goods covered with tarpaulins. Down in the little city of Dawson was still greater confusion.

The Parson paused only to take a dish of " Klondike strawberries " and bacon with his grateful friend of the piece of string, and then, leaving the Doctor by the stuff, he struck the narrow trail to the City of Desire. The path wound among stumps, along sandy knolls and across swamps. Here and there a tent was pitched and occasionally a cabin begun.

" Hello! " cried a voice, and here came running to meet him, dusky visage all agrin, a young Indian who pumped his hand, talking rapidly in Chinook and pigeon English; and lo! it was Sitka Jimmy, to whom long ago the Parson had taught his letters. The Indian led him into his little tent-shack.

" You come iscum muckamuck. Me plenty cow-

cow. Now me pack mail, too. See my gold?" And he dug out from underneath his bunk a tomato can full of yellow dust.

"Why!" exclaimed the Parson, "do you keep it that way?"

"Oh, yes," said Jimmy; "nobody stealem now. Gold too much hyas til (very heavy). You go lookem Dawson, come back eat with me."

And the Parson went on. One long street, if street it could be called, along the uneven margin of the great river, bending in where the banks had crumbled from the force of the current, and then out where the sturdy roots of the evergreens had held them firm. Picturesque signs greeted him: "Last Chance," "The Evergreen," "Little Skookum Saloon," "Go As You Please." On all sides mackinaw-clad, moccasined and fur-capped men were pulling sleds, lounging aimlessly about or whispering eagerly together of the last "strike"; a company of *Cheechakos,* gullible as yet, credulous of the wildest tales, easily befooled, and yet men of the sturdiest fiber, a nation in the making, the foundation of an exceptional society.

Down the bank swung the Parson, not entirely a stranger in a strange land. A familiar name over the door of a saloon struck his eye. "I wonder if that is my old Cassiar friend, Big Bill McGee?" he mused, as he pushed open the door of the large log-cabin saloon.

It was zero weather and there was a foot of snow on the ground. Soon it would be fifty or sixty degrees below zero. Six thousand houseless, homeless men steadily poured as from a mill-race upon this wintry

shore. Every inch of the large saloon was occupied. Two men behind the bar dispensed fiery beverages at a dollar a drink. A third man, one of the proprietors, stood by the gold scales with a " blower " in his hands, weighing the yellow dust.

Behind the first barrier of men the Parson saw tables and men surrounding them, with all possible games of chance before them; here a roulette table, there a faro game, and yonder poker games in full swing, with even three-card monte. But most of the crowd that filled the saloon had not come to drink or to play; simply to be warm and to get in touch with the spirit of the camp. Groups of men were eagerly talking together and questioning " sourdoughs " as to the most promising creeks. The calls of the croupiers, shouts of laughter from the men at the tables, songs from tipsy men at the bar and noisy conversation filled the house with sound.

As the Parson shouldered his way through the crowd, the man at the scales caught sight of him.

" Well, if here isn't the Parson! Bless my soul, I never thought you'd catch me at this trade. Fifteen or sixteen years ago, wasn't it, at my shack in the Cassiar? Remember the big salmon you speared in the Stickeen? I'll not insult you by offering you a drink, but come around to my cabin and I'll treat you to the best meal put up in the camp."

" Thanks, Bill," said the Parson, " I'm here to preach. I've come to you first. Can you give me your saloon for next Sunday? "

Big Bill rolled his eyes in a comical way around the room. " Well, Parson," he replied, " you have stumped

me. I'm your friend and I'll do anything in the world for you; but how in the world can I clear out that crowd or make them keep still even for a moment? At night this floor is packed full with men like sardines in a box, rolled in their blankets, glad to get shelter from the cold. They have not had time to put up cabins; it keeps us hustling to keep those who are broke from starving. Believe it or not, I am making money hand over fist, but I'm saving none of it. I'm giving it away to those who are dead-broke, men who have taken their chances and run in without an outfit."

"I believe it, because I know your big heart," said the Parson. "Where do you think I could get in for Sunday?"

"You might try that dance-hall," said Bill. "Pretty tough place, but that won't feaze you none."

One after another the Parson visited these places of ill-repute. It was not a new experience to him, but this picture was drawn in a little more lurid colors than he had ever seen before. The leashes that held men in were cut. There was no law or restraint or counteracting influence. Young men from good homes and the strict discipline of highly moral communities found all barriers broken down, and, intoxicated by their new-found freedom, indulged themselves to the full in what they called the "forbidden fruits." Many of them were doing the things they had always abhorred, because they thought it was good-fellowship. The free and easy life of the camp drew them. To many a week or two would suffice, and the pendulum of their desires would swing the other way and they would keep stiffer reins upon their passions and appe-

tites. To some the fall would be irretrievable, and the mire forever after cling to their garments. But the great mass of those men were sober, earnest, intelligent, keen-eyed, clear-brained. Obsessed as they were by the passion for getting gold, they were going to do that honorably and earn what they got.

The Parson leaned against the counter and watched the scene. One after another of his old Cassiar friends or newer acquaintances made along the trail came up and shook his hand. A strange company of men to be seen in a saloon; here an earnest class leader in whose tent he had held his meeting at Skagway came cheerfully to greet him; there a venerable elder in whose company he had come from Seattle to Skagway; yonder the little band of College Boys—all these in a saloon, and yet as clean amid these foul surroundings as an angel sent on God's errand to the smoke of hell.

And even those who drank and gambled were not by any means all lost souls. Some of them were simply tasting a cup that they would soon refuse. Here and there, followed by the eyes of all, self-conscious and yet unassuming, moved the lucky ones who had "struck it rich."

There is Big Aleck, the Klondike King; yonder is Charley Nelson, the Lucky Swede; here comes Whitehorse Bill; there's Nigger Pete.

The Parson's eyes were dreamy. He looked upon the moving crowd, but saw them not; the vision of what these men had been and what they would be, of the moral wilderness that was, in his hope, to blossom as the rose; of the return of that sweet

voice which rang out in a maudlin song to the choir music for which it was trained; these visions possessed him and drew his soul through his eyes and gave him that far-away, other-worldly look again.

"Boys," he said to the little company of the Clan, as he marshaled them in a corner of the saloon, "I've got to preach next Sunday. This is Tuesday now, and it will take me another day to get my things from the point down to Dawson and unload them; but I'm going to preach next Sunday and you've got to help me get ready for the meeting. I've been to every saloon, every store, even to the dance-halls, to every large house in Dawson, and they are all too full to make a meeting in them possible. The stores are sold out and piled to the ceiling with other men's outfits. The cabins are all taken or held at exorbitant prices. First I will find a cabin to live in this winter, but more important still than this is to find a place in which to preach the Gospel.

"Bill," he said, calling again to his old-time friend, "can you help me out on this? Isn't there an unfinished building somewhere that I could get and fit up?"

"Well," said Bill, "I'll find you one if you have money enough. How much did you bring in with you?"

"Nothing—or next to nothing," said the Parson sadly. "It's the strangest thing! I can't account for it. My partner and I put our funds together. I have done all the paying out, and calculated upon the money he carried to house us here. I have been pricing cabins to-day and the best bargain offered was a little twelve by fourteen cabin, a little better build-

ing than most, with rough board floor, half sash with real window glass in it, well chinked, tight and snug. It must have taken two men a couple of weeks to build it!"

"What is it offered to you for?" asked Walters, who had come up to the crowd.

"Eight hundred dollars cash! And the little Doctor and I have landed here with one hundred and twenty-five dollars between us. What he has done with the five or six hundred dollars which he started with and did not pay out on the trail I cannot imagine. When I ask him he simply sulks like a sullen boy and answers nothing. He has lost it in some way. But here we are with four months' provisions between us and an eight months' winter on us, and one hundred and twenty-five dollars in our common purse, and not a pound of any kind of food to be had for less than a dollar a pound. I have seen 'grub-scares' before, but never anything like this."

"It's sure a world-beater," assented Big Bill. "Butter's five dollars a pound, and a can of milk two and a half."

"I did a thing myself to-day," said the Parson, "that I am ashamed to tell. I heard a lot of men inquiring for locks to secure their cabins and caches while they are out prospecting. I had a couple of cheap Yale padlocks with me—twenty-five cents apiece in Portland. I displayed them; the men began to bid, and before I knew it I had sold those little padlocks for twenty-five dollars apiece. The Doctor and I have to live this winter on bacon and beans and sourdough bread. However, don't think I am squealing; I have been

in tight places before and I am not afraid; the only fear I have is that this work of mine will be delayed and hindered. I've got to get money somehow. These old-timers that I knew a long time ago will not let me suffer. First I must get the money to buy the cabin and get my goods housed there. I have got to get that money by to-morrow or I cannot get the cabin. Then to find a preaching place."

There was a stir at the door, and a shout arose from Big Bill and the other old-timers as Long Sandy, stooping through the door, entered, shaking hands and being slapped on the back by this and that of his old friends. He caught sight of the Parson and hurried up to him, Carter at his heels.

"We made fast time down the river from the camp in the ice jamb," he said, "and we've been here three days. I've settled Auntie May and the girls in my cabin, near the Mounted Police headquarters, and I bought a little cabin alongside it for Son, here, and me. We are building caches and getting our outfit in shape."

"Have you any news of Viva's father?" inquired the Parson.

"Not yet. The police are investigating. As soon as they saw my Lassie they began to jump around mighty lively. The Lieutenant comes around two or three times a day to 'report progress.' The Captain's lady has been over, and sent in a lot of cookies and jelly. We ought to hear something of Mr. Carroll soon. I've come here now to ask these old-timers about him."

XVI

LANKY BILL

FOR the last ten minutes the Parson had been conscious of a piercing look from a pair of sharp eyes, and now there swung up to him in loose-jointed fashion a bronzed, spare, but well-built man, not old nor young, lean almost to emaciation, with high cheek bones and hatchet face like an Indian's—a strong face, though a rugged one.

"Say, mister," he said, "you'll excuse me, but didn't you teach school on Paradise Ridge in old Kentucky twenty-five years ago?"

"I sure did," said the Parson.

"Well, don't you remember Tom and Bill, the boys of Old Bill, the Sanger?"

"Yes, and you're Bill!" said the Parson. "You bare-footed, freckle-faced mountain lad! I am glad to see you!" and a rapid fire of mutual questions followed.

"Now," said Lanky Bill, "I heard you say, Parson, that you are broke and that you want to do something for us boys here. As I take it, you are up against it pretty hard, but you're not saying all you are thinking. Now, I have struck it rich up here on El Dorado. I've got no use for my money this winter. If you want any gold dust in your business just call on me."

"All right," laughed the Parson, "you're called.

I'll borrow your dust; but how much interest must I pay? I hear money is bringing ten per cent. a month on good security."

"Just forget that," said Lanky Bill. "You're my friend; you were pretty good to me when I was a boy and needed friends. It's very little I can do toward paying you back."

"Here," he called to Big Bill, the saloonkeeper, "weigh out a thousand dollars to this man and check it off against my dust."

This was done, and the Parson put the heavy buckskin sack of gold in his pocket.

"Now," Lanky said to the Parson, "when you want more you'll find me eighteen miles up the trail. See you later, for I've a lot of things to get and take home before night." And away he swung with that easy, loping step that the mountaineer acquires.

"There's the first hill of difficulty leveled to the ground," exulted the Parson. "I've got a cabin and two hundred dollars to boot. Other difficulties will also disappear. Bill," he asked of the saloonkeeper, "where's that house?"

"Well," said Big Bill, "up the street there a ways you'll see a log building without any front door or window, a story and a half, with six little holes in the walls upstairs meant for windows. Yonder is the Frenchman that owns it." And Bill turned to the crowd of thirsty men around his bar.

The Parson walked briskly up to a roly-poly little Frenchman with a round baby-face, on which bristled unexpectedly ferocious scimitar mustaches.

"Are you Napoleon?" asked the Parson.

"Oui, Monsieur."

"Do you want to sell your house?"

"Non, non!" exclaimed the Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders and turning up his palms. "Bymby I make plenty monee. I no sell heem."

"Well," said the Parson, "will you rent it, then?"

"Ya'as," answered the Frenchman; "my monee all gone. I no can feenish heem. Bymby I go outside wit my dogs. I rent heem to you for seven mont."

"Well," said the Parson, as the Frenchman paused, "how much?"

The avaricious eyes of Napoleon twinkled.

"I rent heem to you for seven mont for eight hundred feefty dollar cash, now."

"Sell him, you mean," said the Parson, "and a very high price at that for the house."

"Non, non," reiterated the Frenchman. "I no sell heem; I rent heem eight hundred feefty dollar cash for seven mont."

The Parson turned about in despair to see Lanky Bill sagging toward him in his loose-jointed way, his purchases completed.

"Well, Parson," said Lanky, when he had heard the story, "I guess you will have to come to it. Go ahead and I'll back you. That is about square with the prices of the camp. It's like pulling teeth at first, but you'll get used to it." Then he turned to the Frenchman:

"See here, Nap, go easy. This is a friend of mine; my claim on El Dorado is back of him. Suppose he pays you the eight hundred fifty dollars rent for your little shack here, you'll finish it for him, won't you?"

"Oh, non, non," said the Frenchman again. "I no monee; I'm broke. He feenish it heemself."

Bill turned to the Parson:

"That will be three or four hundred dollars more."

"What are your terms of payment, Nap?"

"Cash down, *now,*" answered the Frenchman.

"That settles it," said the Parson, turning away. "I have no money of my own and very little of yours, Bill, will be left when I pay for my cabin."

Bill turned to the little Frenchman and jerked him around until he faced the pair:

"See here, you're going to give this friend of mine four days. Let's see—till Monday noon, to get that money. Pay him fifty dollars, Parson, and *hustle.* If you don't find it by Saturday, just swing up to my cabin on El Dorado. Now I'll tell you what to do. Let's go upstairs."

A rough stairway led up to the landing where they found six little square rooms no larger than good-sized store boxes, without either doors or windows.

"This crowd of *Cheechakos* will be crazy to find some place to leave their goods while they go wild-catting over the country staking worthless creeks. You circulate among them to-day and see if you can't engage the rent of these rooms at twenty dollars a month apiece. That will pay your rent by spring. Good-by! When you get tired of cooking for yourself hit the trail to my cabin," and he leaned across to the Parson so that passersby would not hear: "I've got the only fresh potatoes and canned tomatoes in town," and away he went up the trail.

"Well," mused the Parson, as he turned down the

street, "this is primitive life sure enough, but it is a good fight and I'm glad I'm here."

"Scotty," he called to his friend, who was waiting on the corner, "don't you want a cache for your grub and a bunk when you come in from the creeks?"

"Sure," said Scotty; "I have a lay in my eye already up Bonanza Creek and I want to be off to see about it. I was wondering where I could leave my outfit."

"Well," offered the Parson, "here's your chance. You see those upstairs rooms yonder? I've rented that house for seven months, and I want some lodgers. There are six of those rooms, and you could put a dozen small outfits in them. I'll put in glass and doors and furnish the heat. I want twenty dollars apiece for those rooms, and if you can find me roomers I'll fit them up without delay.

"It means a church to me, boy," he said to Walters, who stood by. "I have arranged to pay eight hundred fifty dollars cash on Monday, and have the money to raise. I must have some security for the money if I have to borrow it."

"Well," said Walters, "here's one of your rooms taken right now, and I'm thinking you'll need the twenty dollars in advance for the first month, if you have to pay that French Jew! Here it is right now."

"I'll do more than that for ye," said Scotty; "I'll find ye takers for the other rooms."

A clear voice floated down from the side hill on the government ground, sailing through the frosty air like a dove of peace. The tune was "Annie Laurie" and the voice was that of Payson.

"Those boys will help me," thought the Parson, and his long strides soon took him to the jolly group. The axes were swinging and a whipsaw platform was already erected. They were building their house.

"Payson," called the Parson, hurrying up the hill, "you boys are comfortable enough in your tent for a few days. I have a proposition to make you. I have found a house for a church. I have only three days to fit it up before Sunday. There's a door, a window, a stove and seats for the congregation to provide. We've got to make them out of the raw material.

"Now, I've bought a cabin at the foot of the hill, just below your tent. You boys can come in and bunk on my floor and cook on my stove and eat my grub if you will only help me get this house ready. Then, when I've got fitted up and have commenced the services, I'll help you with your house and make you a table or two."

"We are your men," said Payson thoughtfully. "Any man that is up against such a proposition as yours and approaches it in the spirit that you show is worthy of all we can do for him; never mind the return. Come on, boys," he said, "there's no time to be lost."

"I'm not much on the whipsaw," said Fatty Lee, "but I'll take charge of your cabin and cook for the outfit while you're doing things."

"How much for a board?" asked the Parson as they passed a little pile of whipsawed lumber.

"A dollar a foot," replied the owner carelessly.

" That board," pointing to a rough one ten feet long, " is ten dollars."

" Thank you kindly," said the Parson; " good-by! " And the laughter of the boys joined that of the owner of the lumber pile.

" Break up your boxes, boys," commanded the Parson, " and mine, and we'll make doors and window sash. Save the nails as you break up your boxes, for we'll need them all. I priced a pound of nails just now and the man wanted two dollars and fifty cents for it."

Soon the little squad was eagerly at work. From the surrounding groups of miners that passed, some of them packing goods to their cabins, others bound for the distant gold-bearing creeks, some engaged in earnest conversation with mine owners about wages and lays, one by one three young men detached themselves and came up with proffers of help. Soon seven pairs of hands were eagerly at work, some wielding the calking iron and driving the moss between the logs, others hauling moss from the woods in a hand sleigh, others busy at work making doors and window sash.

The Parson had the heavier task to do—he must raise that money. He thought over the names of the old-timers whom he had known on the Coast long before.

" Where are Flanigan and MacDougal and French Pete? " he inquired.

" Go to the gold commissioner's office," was the advice, " and find where they are located."

Soon the Parson found himself in the busiest place

of all. Two lines of men stood stringing back from the two windows in the commissioner's office. These lines, irregular and crooked as a shoestring thrown on the floor, strung out into the street and almost across it—men waiting their turn to record the location of their claims. Clerks were busy writing descriptions and looking up documents. One of them deftly handled the gold scales, weighing the dust, sixteen dollars to the ounce, and an ounce was the price for recording a claim.

"Mr. Murchison," said the Parson, stepping through the wicket door and accosting the commissioner, "I'm a minister sent in to preach to the Klondikers. I am engaged in fitting up a house which I have just rented for a church. I have eight hundred fifty dollars to raise before Monday if I am to rent that house. Can you advise me?"

"Well," replied the commissioner, a quiet man with a weary look on his face, "wouldn't you rather have the cash than the advice?"

"What do you mean?" inquired the Parson.

"Well," the other said, "there is in this safe one hundred thousand dollars or more of government funds for which I am responsible. There is no possible way of sending this dust to Ottawa before the spring. I'm willing to take the responsibility of letting you have the use of some of it, as I know you will not let the burden of repaying it fall on me."

The Parson's vigorous grasp of the hand was more eloquent than his words of gratitude. "One by one the burdens of beginning this work take to themselves wings and fly away," thought he.

"Come back to-morrow," said the commissioner, "and tell me just how much dust you want me to weigh out."

"Now for a stove," pondered the Parson. "That's the big problem."

Banging and clattering sounds came from a log building, low and crude, which dodged back from the street as if trying to hide. A tin bucket swinging on a pole and swaying in the wind was the sign.

"How much for this stove?" he asked the tinsmith, indicating the largest one in the room, an upright, thin, sheet-iron heater.

The tinner looked up from his work.

"That? One hundred twenty-five dollars," and he resumed his pounding.

"Man," said the Parson, "I don't want your whole outfit; just this one stove. I've bought stoves like that for five dollars."

"Take it or leave it," growled the tinner. "It will be one hundred fifty dollars in another hour."

The Parson was nonplussed as he retreated to the street again. Suddenly his eyes caught a glimpse of rusty iron in an alley behind a saloon.

"It seems to be a broken-down iron stove," and, burrowing in the snow, he brought to light the fragments of an old box stove with large, square door.

"Here's my heater," thought he, as he dodged into the back door of the saloon.

"Whose old stove is that?" he asked the barkeeper.

"Oh, that? It's no account. We threw it out

long ago. If you can make any use of it you are welcome to it."

Back to the tin shop now. "I want a few yards of wire. Here, about this much," and he rolled up a little bundle of loose wire.

"Two and a half," said the gruff voice of the tinner.

"Five cents' worth," smiled the Parson. "This is a funny proposition. Here, boys, help me carry in these detached pieces and wire them together."

No sooner said than done, and silently one of the boys brought in four bowlders and disposed them as legs for the stove.

"This won't do," said the Parson; "the bottom is rusted out. Make a little frame of poles and fill it with gravel. We'll put the stove on that."

Now for the pipe. Again to the tin shop. "This second-hand pipe?" he inquired.

"Two dollars a joint," growled the tinner. "Why don't you buy all your stuff at once?"

"It seems the more money that little wretch makes the crosser he gets," the Parson remarked, as he took the stovepipe into the house and set it up, running a joint out of the window.

"What will we do for seats for the church?" asked Payson.

"That's easy," said the Parson. "See those blocks out yonder?" pointing across the street to where the scream of the crosscut saw resounded, as two men were sawing fir logs into stove-wood lengths. "Can we borrow these blocks?" he asked the men.

"Sure thing," said one, and the Parson recog-

nized a member of one of his audiences up the Yukon. "Preach us another sermon about the Northern Lights and you can have the blocks all winter."

"Here are our seats, boys," boasted the Parson; "not all quite the same length, and some of them tipping to all points of the compass, but seats—sixty of them. That's about all we can get into this room."

"Here's your pulpit," shouted one of the boys, staggering into the house with a section of a log and setting it up at the end of the room.

The one glazed window furnished light to the room and the one hinged door gave ingress and egress. Getting the house ready for the meeting took three days of hard work.

Father Justus, the white-haired Jesuit priest who had built St. Mary's Hospital and was revered as Dawson's Saint, came up with expressions of interest and offers of help. Mr. Bowman, the English missionary, offered his small building and a hearty hospitality.

In addition to superintending this work, the Parson must move the Doctor and their outfit from their tent at Louse Town to their new cabin in Dawson. The problem of moving was quickly solved by Viva, the devoted Lieutenant and Indian Jimmy. The lady members of the Clan, including Mrs. Schofield, whose cabin was near Sandy's, came down to "the church" the first morning of the work, full of interest and proffers of assistance. The Captain's lady came along and, of course, the Lieutenant. Long Sandy and Carter were too busy housing their large outfit and protecting it from the "grub thieves" who were already looting unprotected outfits.

The Parson stated his moving problem. "If I only had a sled," said Viva, "Brutus and Cassius could haul the stuff."

"I'll furnish the sled, and another team and sled besides," spoke up the Lieutenant; "and a couple of men to drive both."

"Oh, thank you," said the girl; "but I'll harness Brutus and Cassius myself and drive them. They know me, you see."

"Me gotem fi' dog an' sled," proffered Sitka Jimmy; "me help."

"Things are coming my way wonderfully," rejoiced the Parson. "I guess the Lord wants this work to go on."

The three dog teams, driven by Viva, Jimmy and one of the policemen, made short work of the moving. The "church" was ready Saturday morning, and Mrs. Randall led the "broom squad" and cleaned the room. The brooms were loaned by the Captain's lady, the Parson finding the five-dollar price asked in the store for a twenty-cent broom a little beyond his purse.

XVII

THE JOKE ON THE PARSON

"WE are ready for the congregation at last, boys," said the Parson. "Now let's drum them up. Payson, get together your quartet and drill them on the music; they will have to act as our chimes to call the congregation Sunday. I'll advertise."

A question at the company's store brought forth large empty pasteboard boxes. Tearing off the tops and bottoms of these, the Parson made them into placards.

"There's enough soot in that stovepipe," he thought, "to furnish lampblack." A birch twig pounded at the end provided a brush. "Come to church!" called the handbills which soon appeared on stumps and trees about the camp. "The Green Tree Corner," explained the placard, "at 11 A. M. and 8 P. M. Bring your voices with you, and any musical instruments you can find."

"Comrades," he called to some men about to strike the Klondike trail with a sled full of provisions, "won't you take these placards into your hands and your sleds and leave them every two or three miles up the trail?"

"Sure, Parson," said one, "and I'll come down the sixteen miles from the Forks to the meetin'!"

A company of fine, keen-looking young men, led by Schofield, halted to look at the sign on the church.

" Come to meeting to-morrow," invited one of the College Boys.

Schofield greeted the Parson. " We're all reporters from New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis and California papers, including the Associated Press and the Scripps-MacRae League."

" You'll attend to the publicity business then," suggested the Parson. " Things are working together splendidly."

" Very good; we'll report your meetings," said they.

The house was ready, the wood gathered and the meeting well advertised by Saturday evening. Scotty had secured renters for all the upstairs rooms, with a month's pay in advance for each. It was with an exulting heart that the Parson turned his steps to his cabin that night. His joy was not smothered by the cloud of smoke that greeted him—the result of the little Doctor's futile efforts to make a fire out of green cottonwood.

" Doctor, I will be late to-night," he had said to his partner in the morning. " I've rustled the wood always morning and evening. We have not enough now to do for Sunday. You cut the wood to-day, as you are not working at the church; and, for pity's sake, don't repeat your last blunder. Get dry spruce, not green spruce; there's plenty of it here."

As he was leaving the Doctor called him back. " How do you tell green spruce from dry spruce? " he asked.

" Well," exclaimed the Parson, repressing a laugh,

"the green spruce has little green leaves or needles on it, and the dry spruce has none."

The green cottonwood was the result of this explanation.

It was a rough-looking crowd of men that greeted the Parson Sunday morning, sixty of them, filling every seat. The four ladies of the Clan, with three or four others, occupied the front seats, proud little Kitty at the organ.

Not one of these men had shaved for five or six weeks at least. How could they, trying to beat King Winter in the race to the Klondike? There was not a white shirt or a collar in all that congregation—not even on the preacher. The Parson wore a blue mackinaw, red flannel shirt, pants of fuzzy woolen stuff with black and yellow stripes, German socks of a bright green up to his knees, and moccasins. The rest were similarly clad, the old-timers among them wearing canvas parkies over their woolen clothes. Some of the College Boys had sweaters.

Yet, as the Parson glanced over the congregation, he noted with interest ten college graduates whom he recognized as such, and the clear, keen look on other faces proclaimed them men of culture and education. And the farmers and mechanics among them were equally intelligent along their individual lines. Here, at last, was his ideal congregation; here was a company of his peers—men of every profession and able to discuss any subject of science, politics or religion—a most independent congregation who were there for strong meat and who would not be apt to

come again were they not fed; men of all religious beliefs and of none; a critical yet most kindly and responsive congregation.

"Where," thought the Parson, "could I find another audience equal to this? I must do my best."

The little red hymn-books were distributed with a dozen larger books containing the tunes. The College Quartet, led by Payson and aided by the gold commissioner and other experienced choristers, were the choir. Everybody sang with all his might, and never had the minister been better satisfied with the musical part of a service.

The Parson was at his best, and yet somehow none of his former sermons, analyzed and elaborated with great care, illustrated from history and science, revised and re-revised and polished with his best ecclesiastical tools, seemed to fit the occasion.

He stood on a different plane here and preached from a different angle. So he just talked from his heart to theirs. He entered into their lives and feelings and the experiences of the trail, and with the aid of it all he strove to bring them out from the hardness and savagery of the gold-lust and the strife to beat one another in the race for gold, into that human kindliness, that altruistic care for each other, that other-worldliness that is the very spirit of the wilderness.

The Parson's attention had been attracted from the first to a lean, rough-featured, rugged-faced man whose fur-trimmed canvas parkie and mahogany complexion proclaimed him an "old-timer." He came late, with that glow on his bronzed face and that

slow, mighty heave of the chest that tells of a long and rapid journey. He sat on a front block and turned an eager, expectant face to the Parson. Every emotion of the Praise Psalm swept in responsive waves over his face; his eyes shone as his voice rang out, clear and loud, in the familiar hymns. Irrepressible amens burst from him during the prayer, and when the sermon began the growing illumination of his face was like the turning on of light after light within a cathedral.

The Parson's eyes could not leave the face of this man, and presently he saw big tears well up within the full eyelids and pour forth in unheeded streams to the floor. To preach to him was like playing upon the strings of a harp, so instant and so vibrant was the response.

The sermon closed. Then came the collection. There were no silver coins and few gold ones in circulation. Every man fingered his wallet of gold dust. The old-timer did not hesitate. His buckskin gold poke swung up with instant motion, one hand grasped the sack at the bottom, a deft tug of the other fingers loosed the string, and he poured the whole contents—all the dust he had—into the tin "blower" which was the only collection plate.

The men came crowding to shake hands after the benediction, the skeptics and agnostics just as eagerly as the rest; but the old-timer was before them all.

"Parson," he exulted, "it is a great day for me. I'm a Christian man. I never miss a chance to go to church. Four hours ago at the Forks I heard of the meeting. It took some mushing, but I got here, thank

the Lord! It is the first sermon I've had a chance to hear for ten years!"

"Welcome!" responded the Parson. "Will you be here this winter?"

"No," said the old timer, "I leave for Alaska to-morrow; but I've got inspiration to-day to last me another ten years."

"Comrades," cried the Parson, before the crowd could disperse, "there's one matter I forgot to mention, and you will have to help me out in this. How are we going to light our church to-night? Candles are one dollar apiece and I have none. Blow out the candle you would have used in your cabin to-night and light it here; it will not burn any faster giving light to twenty than to you alone. I will furnish the candlesticks."

The evening congregation was still larger, standing men filling all the available space. The service was still more simple, intimate and sympathetic; and many remained until long after the benediction, singing and talking. The new departure in the camp had made good.

The next morning the Parson on his way to the meetinghouse, where he must spend many days making window sash and doors, fixing up for his roomers, passed through a hilarious crowd. The College Boys and the reporters had got together. Two strangers had come from the creeks who were also introduced as newspaper men.

"What is the joke?" asked the Parson.

"It is not a joke; it is a very serious matter," replied one of the newcomers. "I'm thinking of mak-

ing a story of it for my paper. These would be the scareheads: 'ANOTHER FRAIL CLERGYMAN! THE SENSATIONAL STORY OF THE HOUR! SCANDAL IN THE KLONDIKE!'"

"How is that?" asked the Parson.

"Why, they tell me," said the reporter, with a twinkle in his eye, "that you confessed to a very common human frailty last night. They said that you preached a sermon on 'comfort.'"

"Yes," said the Parson; "what is there wrong in that?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing at all; but they say that you enumerated the different sources from which men draw their comfort."

"Yes?"

"Well, and that when you got through you suddenly held up in your hand a great big black bottle, and on the front in large letters, so that the whole congregation could read, was printed 'Old Rye Whisky,' and that you said with great unction, 'Here is where I get my comfort!'"

In the laugh that followed the Parson said:

"Well, boys, if I were that sort of a man I would say 'the drinks are on me.' I confess to the letter of the joke, but not to the spirit of it. Didn't they tell you of the candle and of the Bible in the other hand, and that the bottle was the candlestick?"

"No," said the newcomer; "they left that out; and when we report it *we* are going to leave it out; it spoils the point of the story."

"But, Dominie," said Payson, "if you will give the boys that sort of preaching every Sunday you'll

not fail of a crowd. How large was the collection?"

"One hundred thirty-two dollars," said the Parson; "and what pleased me was the truly Biblical 'hilarious' way in which the boys gave it. Now if you'll help me carry this friendly warfare up the creeks we'll have a grand campaign this winter. There's going to be a lot of distress; the scurvy is beginning, the typhoid fever is here already; there are three cases of pneumonia and half a dozen men have frozen their feet.

"I'm getting hold of the old Forty Mile Library, and we'll have a reading-room right in the church. Wherever you find a man without a home, steer him there and we'll give him a place to spread his blankets. Our meetinghouse is not going to be accessible for only one day in the week and two hours in that day; but every hour of the day and every day of the week it is going to shelter the homeless, give social entertainment to the lonely, and be an intelligence office for those who are seeking work. If you weren't all such strong, manly men I would call it 'The Help,' but I mean it for a place where *you* can do the helping. Father Justus's Hospital is going to be too small after the big rush begins, and we'll have to build another. It's going to be a great winter for all who are willing to do altruistic work."

BOOK III
GOLD

XVIII

KING GRUB

LONG SANDY had to bow very low in order to enter the door of the Parson's cabin. It was the last week in October—two weeks after the landing at Dawson.

"Well, Parson," he said, "I've just come to say good-by for a spell. Son and I have finished our caches and got our goods in them safe, and we're going to my claim on Upper Eldorado this afternoon. I've got to see if there's a pay-streak on it. I never wanted so bad to strike it rich in all my life before."

"What about Mrs. Randall and the girls?"

"Oh, they're snugly fixed. You see, I had plenty of leisure last spring as I come up from Forty Mile, and took some pains with my cabin. You've seen it, and know that there isn't such another in town—small but well built—logs hewn—floor planed—white canvas lining for the walls—two good windows, both doubled for warmth—neat tables—good home-made chairs. And since May and the lassies have got their hands on it—well, it's a little bit of heaven enclosed in spruce logs."

"Where do you and Carter sleep?" queried the Parson.

"In our little cabin alongside. It is rough in comparison, though the women have fixed it up, too. To think that the Lord has given such a home and family

to an old Indian like me! I can't make it real. It's too good to be true. Do you know, I'm getting as jealous as Satan of Mr. Carroll," he went on. "He'll come and take them all away—but he's got to take me, too. I want to get into the pay-streak before he turns up. A fortune wouldn't be a fair payment for the happiness I've had the past few weeks."

"Have they heard anything of Mr. Carroll?" inquired the Parson.

"Nothing definite. You see, he came down the river as soon as the ice broke up last summer. The Mounted Police hadn't got here yet. Some of my old partners from Forty Mile and Circle think they met such a man early in the summer, and that he was going down the Yukon, bound for a mysterious, hard country, far in the interior of Alaska. The Yukon hasn't frozen solid yet, and will not be safe till about the first of December. It is pretty hard on my Lassie to have to wait here all this time without being able to follow up the slight clews we have. But, God bless her! You can't depress or discourage that child. She's a living fountain of hope and joy to herself and all the rest of us."

"That she is," assented the Parson; "and Mrs. Randall is a placid lake of peace and rest."

"And little Kitty is a cheerful creek which has come through rocky rapids and over falls into a pure, onward flowing stream. There are golden sands in the girl, too. She surprises us every day by some bright saying or new, loving trait. She's no longer a mere shadow of Lassie; she is developing a personality of her own."

"Yes," said the Parson; "it seems a hard thing to say, but the unspeakable, foul experience of that week of slavery is working out for good to her. She never would have been the woman she is going to make without it. God knew what He was about when He permitted it. Your family, Sandy, is the best and most wonderful thing that ever happened to a mining camp. All of our preaching and praying is nothing to it. It does the men more good just to look at them and hear them sing in church on Sundays than any spoken sermon."

"Don't forget Son," said the old miner. "He's all man when you get under his skin."

"Nor yourself, you old Sinner!" laughed the Parson. "Two months ago a lonely old backwoods bachelor, scared stiff if the shadow of a woman fell across your path; to-day the most experienced and most envied ladies' man in the Northwest, having the custody of the three bright, particular jewels of the camp. You'll have to watch sharp, or some of us young fellows will break into your strong box."

"Where are the rest of the Clan?" inquired Sandy.

"Scotty and Walters have left the most of their outfit in their room in the church, and have taken a lay on Bonanza. They are working like beavers to build their cabin and get their first hole down. The College Boys have built on the sidehill, just back of me here, a cabin which is a curious combination of ingenuity and awkwardness. Three of them—Payson, Saunders and Fatty Lee—have taken a lay on Bonanza near Scotty's; one—the youngest and small-

est—is keeping the cabin here; and the other—the tuberculous one—is going to spend the winter stampeding with the other madmen all over the country to wild-cat creeks—thinks it will help his lungs, and that he may stumble on something good for himself and the rest of the bunch. Fine boys; I hope they'll strike it. They've pooled everything."

"How about the Doctor?"

"Well, do you know, I'm beginning to have some hopes of manhood in the little misfit after all. He's a baby, he's selfish, he's pitifully incompetent, he's a coward and a fool, but he is circulating among the sick, and doing what he can for them. He is ministering to those who have no money to pay the other doctors. And he is developing a conscience. Did you know about his running up against the Soapy Smith gang in the shell-game?"

"Yes, Scotty told me."

"Well, I never dreamed that his money was lost in that way; but last night, after sitting in silence a long time, he broke down and confessed his crime—for it was a crime to gamble away our partnership money, and a still worse crime to gamble away the money contributed so generously for this work. It appears the Colonel pulled him away before he had lost all he had, and he made the Colonel promise not to tell me, but let him tell me himself. Amid his tears the whole shameful story came out."

"I hope you gave him the lecture of his life," cried Sandy.

"I hardly knew what to say at first. It seemed such an awful thing to do; and such a perilous thing to let us

come in here with less than half an outfit and with no money. I felt sore at the Colonel and at the rest of those who knew for not warning me. I would, of course, have sent him back home. I would not have taken this desperate chance. But I'm glad now that the Colonel and the rest of you didn't tell on him. This confession will do him more good than anything else that has ever happened to him. He is twice the man to-day that he was yesterday. He actually got up this morning and made the fire. It took him an hour, and he used up a whole week's kindling—but he made it; and I lay and pretended to be asleep. I didn't let him attempt the breakfast—he has ruined too many precious pots of beans and loaves of bread for me to risk leaving him alone with anything on the stove. But this is the first time he has volunteered to do anything, and I'm encouraged."

Sandy was silent. He had his own opinion about the depth of the Doctor's contrition, for he happened to know of a visit Scotty had paid the Doctor, and had some inkling of what the Scotch-Irishman had said at the interview; and so he could hardly look upon the confession as entirely voluntary. But the fact that it was made was something, and he would not lessen the Parson's faith in the ultimate salvation to Christian manhood of this partner so strangely thrust upon him.

"Well, I'll be going," Long Sandy said. "Son and I have a lot to do—our house to build on the claim, and the Lord only knows how many holes to put down. Go and see my Family every day, and come up to our shack whenever you visit the creeks," and

he bent almost double again as he backed out of the low door.

The Parson had worked hard and well to fit the upper story of his rented house for the accommodation of his roomers. The six little rooms, nine by seven feet square, were each fitted with a small half-sash window and a door leading into the narrow middle hall. Each room held the winter's outfit of provisions for at least two men—the sacks and boxes piled to the ceiling, two or three berths, one above another, with blankets and robes in them and sacks of clothing under the lower berth. There was a small stove in each room and a little table.

These little rooms were the warehouses for the Parson's renters, and held their most precious possessions —their food for the winter. For the one question everybody asked of himself (with the eight months that must intervene before the first boats up the Yukon could arrive) was not " Have I a good mine or a good business prospect ? " but " How much grub ? "

" *King Grub* is sure the boss of this camp," Lanky Bill had said that very morning, as the owner of the Lucky Number Claim passed the time of day with the Parson. " Nobody has too big an outfit, and most of these *Cheechakos* have come in mighty short; or else they've brought in a lot of stuff that won't do them any good. How are you fixed ? "

" A bare four months' supply for the Doctor and me," answered the minister very gravely.

" That's bad, that's d-darned bad ! " He pondered, his head twisted to one side and sagging on his lean neck.

"I've an idea, and I think it'll work. A lot of the boys who were in here last winter, or else came in on the steamboats last summer, have good outfits. They landed them up here for fifteen or twenty cents a pound. Now they can get a dollar a pound for them. The fellows that are not working claims this winter—a lot of them—are going to mush outside as soon as the trail's good, and come in next summer with fresh outfits. They'll sell their outfits. I'll steer one of them up to you."

"It's no use," objected the Parson. "I've no dust."

"They don't want dust," said Lanky Bill, "nor gold coin, nor anything that has weight. And they don't want any kind of money. They want paper—an order on somebody outside—something that the Soapy Smith gang and the other robbers along the trail can't use."

"Very well; send them around. I might be able to fix it that way." For the Parson was desperate—ready to catch at any straw.

That evening, tired and somewhat anxious, his steps turned naturally toward the one cabin where he was always sure of cheer and encouragement. Its white canvas walls reflected the glow of the lamps, for Long Sandy was almost the only one in Dawson who possessed the priceless treasure of kerosene. But the brighter faces and smiles of Mrs. Randall and the girls shone clear through his eyes and into his heart. They were, as always, busily at work—making buckskin gold pokes this time.

"Just think!" exulted little Kitty. "I've made ten dollars to-day, and I'll make it twelve or fifteen before

bedtime. Why, in Seattle, I thought I was doing great things if I earned half a dollar a day! I'm so glad to be a help," and her needle flew back and forth through the soft white leather.

"Mrs. Considine has procured us some beautiful moose and caribou skins, dressed by the Indians, and as soft as velvet," said Mrs. Randall. "We are going to have all we can do this winter. But it makes me feel ashamed to take the prices we are paid for our work."

The door opened and the Captain's lady and Mrs. Schofield came in, escorted by the Lieutenant and the reporter and a young lawyer they called Judge Jasper.

The officer greeted the Parson warmly. "That was a handsome thing you did to-day, sir. By Jove! I like to see a minister who will break clear away from ecclesiastical rules and regulations and do a simple, Christly thing like that, no matter how it looks to the Church or the world."

"What was it?" asked Schofield, scenting a story.

"Oh, just a funeral I held this afternoon," replied the Parson; "that was all. There was nothing worthy of praise in it. I did the only thing there was to do under the circumstances—which were strange enough."

"Go on and tell us about it," urged Viva.

"Well, about noon, just after your Uncle Sandy had left, there came a knock at my door. I opened it, and a fine-looking, brown-whiskered man stood there.

"'Are you the minister?' he inquired.

"'Yes,' I said. 'What can I do for you?'

"'I wanted to see if—if you would conduct a funeral.' He spoke with hesitation.

"'Why, certainly,' I answered. 'When is it to be?'

"'Right away,' he said, 'if—if you—are—are willing.'

"'Why should I not be willing?' I replied. 'That is one of the things I am here for.'

"'Perhaps when you know the—the circumstances you'll not have anything to do with it.'

"'I can't imagine circumstances that would prevent me from giving Christian burial to anybody,' I said. 'But sit down and tell me about it.'

"He took the seat I offered, but seemed reluctant to begin.

"'Who was the dead man?' I asked.

"'I don't know his name,' was the answer. 'Black Bob they call him. I never saw him till last night.'

"'What was his disease?'

"He looked me square in the face. 'He had no disease,' he said quietly. 'I shot him.'

"'What!' I exclaimed. 'You killed the man? What was he doing? Was there a fight?'

"'No,' he answered, 'he was stealing my grub. It was this way: My partner and I got in two months ago. We built a cabin just above the bluff, near the mouth of the Klondike. We made a tight log cache behind it and a stout door, stored our grub in it, and locked it with a Yale padlock. We locked up the cabin and cache three days ago and went to Hunker Creek to look at a lay that was offered us there. When we got back yesterday we found that somebody had tampered with our cache and had stolen four sacks of

flour and a gunny of bacon. It made us wild. We were scared. We were short of grub anyhow, and to have somebody taking what we had—why, man, it meant death to us. It was dusk when we got home, and when we found out our loss we thought that probably the thief didn't know we were home and would come back. So we didn't make any change in the cache; we made no fire and didn't light the candles. I got my Winchester all ready, and we laid for him.

"'About two o'clock in the morning I heard a sound in the cache. I took my rifle and slipped out. There was plenty of light. I saw a man walk out of my cache with a sack of flour on his shoulder. "Put that flour back!" I hollered. He started to run with the flour. "Drop it or I'll shoot!" I yelled. He kept on. He was just disappearing in the shadow of the trees when I fired. He dropped like an axed steer and never moved. I got him right back of the ear. I went up and turned him over. Then I took the flour sack back and locked the cache. As soon as it was light this morning I went down to the Post and told Captain Considine about it. He sent up the Lieutenant and a couple of men. They made inquiries and found Black Bob's partner in a cabin not far from mine. My flour and bacon were in his cache. The partner said Bob told him he had bought the stuff.'

"'Did they arrest you?' I asked.

"'Not yet,' he answered, 'and I don't think they will. The Lieutenant and his men are up there now. I got Black Bob's partner and my own and a couple of friends of mine, and we took some boards from my

floor and made a coffin and put Bob in it. Two of them dug a grave in the dry shale by the Point. Then I came for you.

" ' Parson,' he said, ' I never had any serious trouble with anybody in all my life. I'm a church member, and try to be a consistent one; but—I'd do it again. In this camp a man's grub is his life; and when a thief steals your grub he takes your life. It seemed as if it was the thief's life or mine and my partner's. But somehow it doesn't seem right to bury any human being like a dog; and, as I had taken the responsibility of sending this man's soul before his Maker, I thought I'd do what I could and give him a decent burial. Will you hold services over him?'

" ' Certainly,' I answered, and I went with him, and we had a regular funeral. There was quite a crowd. The homicide and his partner, with Black Bob's partner and three other men, were the pall-bearers."

" Yes," the Lieutenant added, " but that wasn't all. When the Parson got there there were fifty or sixty excited men gathered. Several of them had found some of their provisions in the dead man's cache, and they were for lynching his partner and looting his cache. I had had trouble to keep them in check till the Parson came.

" When he began to prepare for the service some of the men objected. One man shouted, ' You're not going to bury that damned grub-thief like they buried my mother? He's got what was coming to him! He had no pity on us; why should we show respect to him? Cut a hole in the ice and throw him in the river

like the dog he is!' It looked as if we were going to have a riot. Several men started toward the coffin. But the Parson soon had them in hand. He stepped right in front of the coffin and confronted the mob.

"'Men,' he said, 'I'm ashamed of you. The man is dead. He has gone to give account of himself to a higher tribunal. Who are we that we should insult a wonderful creation like the human body? The mystery of life and death is before us. Black Bob was a beloved and petted baby once. He had a mother who loved him. Probably some woman loves him now. We are going to bury him as reverently as if he were the purest saint on earth. We will hold our services, and then you will all follow the body to the grave.' And they did—every man of them."

"That was fine!" said Mrs. Randall. "I wish you could have called us to the funeral."

"But this shows," said Schofield, who had been taking notes, "what a terribly earnest question the food question is here. It is the one topic of conversation."

"There seem to be three degrees of capital crime in this camp," remarked Judge Jasper. "The first and most heinous, requiring instant death without trial or jury, is stealing grub. The second, demanding condign punishment, but giving the criminal a little chance for his life, is robbing sluice boxes. The third, and least black, demanding a regular trial before judge and jury, with all facilities for defense, is murder."

"Well, the food question is a very serious one with us all," said the Parson, as he rose to go—for it was a well-known law of Mrs. Randall's household, gently

but strictly enforced, that her precious girls must be in bed before eleven—" and I fancy there is not one of us who is satisfied with his outfit or free from anxiety about the future."

" Uncle Sandy and I have a great scheme for the relief of the camp," cried Viva. " Just wait till you see us carry it out."

That night the blow fell—crushing, stunning, paralyzing.

The Parson awoke with a start. It was three o'clock in the morning. There were excited cries in the street and the patter of running feet. A red glow was in his window. He hurriedly dressed and went out. The fire was in the direction of the church, which was half a mile from his cabin.

He ran with the running men—outran most of them. The fear became a certainty. And when he came up to the crowd of helpless men who were watching it burn, he saw his beloved church, on which he had worked so hard and for which he had incurred a debt of fifteen hundred dollars, a mass of blazing logs.

But he hardly thought of that. " The outfits!" he cried. " Fifteen outfits of food—all they have—are burning up! What will these men do?"

The calamity was irretrievable—appalling. The owners of the outfits were nearly all absent. Among them were Scotty and Walters, and the gray-haired elder and the earnest class leader, and others not so close to him, but demanding no less sympathy. All of them were out of money, and now out of food—and

the relentless King Winter rushing on and howling his derision at the fleeing King Grub.

Not a pound of food from all those outfits could be saved. A few hymn-books and a little reading matter downstairs could be carried out, but nothing from the upper story. The poor fellow whose drunken stupor and poorly placed miner's candlestick had caused the calamity was standing in the snow, shivering in his underclothes.

Napoleon was stamping about screaming his "Mon Dieus!" and "Sacr-r-r-é-és!" and execrating everybody and everything in a mixture of bad French and worse English until Big Bill Magee took him by the shoulder and shook him roughly.

"Shut up, you blamed fool!" he cried. "What are you crying about? You got for rent twice the money you put into the building. It's the Parson and the men who have lost their outfits who are hard hit."

He came over to the Parson and his big arm went over the Parson's shoulder in a half caress. "Come and see me to-morrow," he invited; "I've a proposition to make you."

The young missionary of the Church of England, between whom and the Parson a warm friendship already flourished, and who had led the men in efforts to save things from the burning building, came with tears of sympathy brimming his eyes. "You can use my church until you get another building," he proffered.

Father Justus, of the Catholic Hospital, came with offers of blankets and food.

The hardest time came with the morning, when the losers, stricken in the very citadel of their existence, came flocking in from their claims. Then the Parson must forget his own loss and stress in the greater stress and loss of those who had been deprived of their food supply. Captain Considine, the managers of the two big stores, the Church of England missionary, Father Justus, of the Catholic Hospital, and other influential men must be called in committee to discuss the situation and plan measures of relief.

The Parson must act as chairman of this relief committee and put aside his own claims to minister to the greater needs of his friends. Outfits must be squeezed from the almost depleted stores, and Big Bill Magee, Lanky Bill, Alex. McKenzie—the Klondike King—and other lucky miners must guarantee the payment for these outfits at summer prices. The Parson's cabin and Schofield's and Long Sandy's and the College Boys' must be fitted with extra bunks, and, with their scanty outfits, placed at the disposal of the burned-out ones.

Scotty, with his twisted smile and queer, consoling quotations, dug from out-of-the-way corners of the Bible, found a temporary home in the Parson's cabin and a welcome at his table.

Walter Walters, not cast down for a minute, found a beautiful law of compensation in the fact that he was quartered in Long Sandy's smaller cabin, and permitted to eat three ambrosial meals a day for a whole week sitting opposite to Viva.

Long Sandy himself came home from the Creek, leaving Carter and two other men at work putting

down holes and searching diligently for the elusive pay-streak.

Sandy and Viva and Walters got their heads together at sundry times, in earnest consultation; and then and there was completed the great scheme of relief of which Viva had hinted. No time was lost in carrying it into execution.

Chief Abraham, of the Tuksuk Indians below Dawson, and Chief Toozle (short for Methusaleh), from the Bishop's flock at Forty Mile, were speedily sent up the Klondike River with fast dog teams as scouts; and on their report a week later there was a hurried and secret departure. Nobody but experienced hunters and good shots need apply.

Two hours before daylight, or about seven o'clock in the morning, the start was made in front of Sandy's cabin. There were Chiefs Abraham and Toozle, with their teams of snapping huskies; Sitka Jimmy's fine team of malamutes had Walter's stuff; and Viva and Long Sandy had Brutus and Cassius, reinforced by Cato—another St. Bernard of almost identical size, weight and color, loaned for the expedition by Miss Maloney, of Grand Forks. Each sled was equipped with tent, stove, sleeping bags, snowshoes, guns and ammunition.

A handshake all around for the members of the Clan and the few friends who had left their beds to see them off, kisses for Auntie May, and a reassuring hug for the inconsolable Kitty, murmured "good-bys" and "God bless yous"—and, the three Indians and Long Sandy at the gee-poles, Viva and Walters running behind their respective sleds, "Mush, mush!"

to the dogs—and the "Relief Expedition" swung rapidly up the Klondike, the shrill shrieking of the sleds in the keen frost and the calls of the drivers dying away in the distance.

In ten days they are back, the sleds all loaded high with fat meat; and thereafter for two months the Indians and Walters are very busy hauling in the frozen carcasses and dispensing them to eager purchasers. The price is conscientiously kept down to a dollar a pound, in spite of the effort of would-be speculators to corner the meat market. Ten fine caribou are turned over to Father Justus for his hospital, and a saddle apiece to the Parson's burned-out tenants.

"Oh, don't ask me about it!" protested Viva to the Parson, the Schofields and the Captain's lady, who had come at Mrs. Randall's invitation to a "feast of fat things" prepared by that wondrous cook. "I'm not fit to be spoken to. I'm nothing but a bloody murderess—a red-handed slaughterer of innocent creatures. Sport? There was no sport! I just shot and shot and shot, the poor, stupid beasts marching up to me in endless procession to be killed. Nothing but the thought of this starving camp kept me at the horrible business."

"I don't think it was horrible at all," said Auntie May. "I know some very nice meat men."

"You see," continued Viva, "Abraham and Toozle had located the herd of caribou, and knew just where and when they would cross the upper Klondike Valley. We got there just in time. I had to do most of the shooting, as the men had their hands full, butchering and preparing the meat; and we didn't want the In-

dians to be banging around, scattering the herd and crippling more than they killed.

"Where we were the herd had to bunch up in order to pass through a gorge. They were more than a week passing that place. Uncle Sandy says there were thirty thousand in that herd. I would take my stand on some little hill or mound and let them come to me. They came and came. One morning in an hour, almost without moving from my tracks, I dropped twenty-five, and then stopped for the day to let the men fix the meat. I feel as if I never want to see a caribou again."

"So you didn't enjoy your hunt?" queried the Parson.

"Yes, I had some real sport with the wolves. After the first day they got to sneaking into the slaughtering places, and I'd get them evenings and mornings and at night when the moon and the Aurora were bright. I got twenty-four fine wolf skins, five foxes and three wolverines. Old Toozle is going to take them to Forty Mile and get them dressed and made into robes. I shot off all your shells, Parson, after mine were gone. Your rifle's a dandy! We picked four fine saddles for you and the Doctor for the use of it. And I cached a beautiful head for you if you care to go after it. See mine?" pointing to a wonderful mass of horns—sixty points in them—surmounting a shapely muzzle and large white "bell."

"I'm going to be good now, Parson," she said, "and go to church and shrive my soul of the blood of the innocent."

"I'll give you free absolution right now, without further confession, you wonderful child!" said the Parson warmly. "The whole camp is deep in your debt."

"We had her do the shooting because she was the best shot," said Walters. "She never missed, and seldom had to give a caribou a second bullet. You'll find no mutilated meat—clean neck shots almost every one. The Indians think she is a goddess from another world. I caught one of them fixing up a charm of feathers and quills, and putting it where her shadow would fall upon it."

The Parson's depression had vanished. He was his own buoyant, enthusiastic self again. The morning after the fire he had gone to see Big Bill Magee according to his request. He found him earnestly talking with Lanky Bill and half a dozen other old-timers.

"Come here, Parson," called the big saloonkeeper. "We boys have been talking you over. You've struck a mighty bad streak of hard luck. Now, you're here to do this camp good—we all know that. We old-timers have just completed a big log hall for the Pioneers. We intended to have Sunday dances in it, but we've decided to let you have it free of rent for the winter to hold your meetin's in."

The Parson wrung his hand. "I always thought that the Northwest produced the most generous, free-hearted men in the world," he said, "and now I am sure of it. God bless the Pioneers!"

Lanky Bill broke in upon the Parson's thanks: "I've found a man with an outfit to sell. He's going

outside in a week or two. Here he is," introducing a tall Canadian.

Then and there the Parson purchased six hundred pounds of provisions for six hundred dollars, giving in payment an order on his Board for the amount, and directing that it be charged against his next year's salary. That would not be due until the next summer, for the Parson had drawn his half of his salary for the whole year, August to August, and would not encroach upon the other half, which was supporting his children at school.

He knew his Board would honor his unbusiness-like order, and took his chances of being able to raise the advanced money when the time should come; but he did not know that the kindly treasurer of the Board would take his letter and his story to a meeting in New York and that an enthusiastic " Aye " would greet the proposition of the chairman to give the six hundred as a " special " and so relieve the Parson of his burden.

Thus *King Grub* was robbed of his terrors in the Klondike. And two Sundays after the return of the hunters, at the close of the morning's service, which was surprisingly well attended, the glib-tongued Schofield called the dispersing congregation to attention, and, addressing the astonished and blushing Viva, presented to her a huge nugget chain " from the whole camp, as a small token of our gratitude to you for having rescued the Klondike from the fangs of the Hunger-Wolf and the black scourge of scurvy."

XIX

KING WINTER

"DID you ever know anything so absolutely perfect as this weather?" asked the Parson, breezing into "Nestlenigh Cabin," as Kitty had dubbed it, one clear, keen night, the middle of November. "I have heard the old prospectors rave about the Yukon winters, but this exceeds all my expectations. One can breathe a lungful here. I've grown ten years younger since I left the States."

"Yes, isn't it fine!" echoed Viva. "I just can't stay inside. I'd be out all day and all evening, too, with the dogs if Auntie May or Kitty would come with me. Their industry is appalling."

"Now, Viva, didn't I spend two whole precious hours with you this afternoon?" protested Kitty. "And these gloves for Lanky Bill not finished," holding up a pair of buckskin gloves lined with Arctic squirrel, with long gauntlets and prettily ornamented with red and yellow stitching. For the three were all busy making gloves this time.

"Mousie is a child wonder," admired Viva. "I'm only an apprentice beside her. Why, she can sew as well as Auntie May."

"Much better," said the lady. "I am taking lessons from her."

The delicate face of the young girl flushed with

pleasure as she held up the beautiful gloves, finished. "Lanky Bill will give me an ounce and a half for these, and I made them in two days," she boasted. "He told me if I'd pay a visit to the Lucky Number Claim he'd let me select a pan of dirt and keep what I found in it. I'll take Uncle Sandy along and let him pick it and pan it for me."

"You're a mercenary little wretch, Mousie," said Viva severely. "I'll not have it. Lanky Bill is a good friend of ours and you mustn't rob him."

"Oh, let her do it," pleaded the Parson. "It's the custom of the country. I hear that Bill has uncovered a rich streak lately, and has been getting some five-hundred-dollar pans. He'll not miss one."

"Five hundred dollars!" gasped Kitty, round-eyed with wonder. "I'll put it right in Uncle Sandy's poke!"

She hugged Viva rapturously. "You come along, Mother Viva, and we'll both pick pans. It's our only way of getting even with Uncle Sandy."

"How are your patients, Mrs. Randall?" inquired the Parson.

"The two typhoid patients are very low," she replied. "The men with the scurvy are about the same as they were last week. I don't know what to do for scurvy; neither do the doctors. I've used up nearly all our lime juice and scraped Lanky Bill's last two potatoes for them. The fresh meat helped them some, but the disease is so slow. I went down to the hospital yesterday and asked Father Justus about it. He told me to get cottonwood twigs and make tea of them, and I'm trying that."

"But, Mrs. Randall, I am very much concerned about you; you are around these typhoid cases so much. Please be careful, for your own sake and all of ours." Thus said the Parson anxiously.

"Oh, I boil all the water we use," answered the lady placidly. "I'll be safe, I think. I have been among the sick all my life. I like to nurse."

"Do you think the river is getting solid enough for us to travel on it?" inquired Viva anxiously.

"Not yet," he replied. "You'll have to be patient for two weeks yet. There are two hundred and eighty miles of river between here and Circle City, with some bad rapids and gorges. Have you heard anything of your father?"

"No. It is so hard to sit here and do nothing. The Lieutenant has sent a letter down to Forty Mile by old Toozle, asking the Bishop to send Indians with all haste across the mountains to Circle with a letter to some Mounted Police who went there by the last boat down the Yukon for provisions for this post. They will make inquiries at Circle and Fort Yukon and bring us word as soon as they can travel on the ice."

"And then what?" queried the Parson.

"Oh, then, if we hear anything, definite or indefinite, Uncle Sandy and I will start at once to find him."

"And the rest?"

"Auntie May and Kitty will stay right here, with you to look after them. Tom Carter will keep on putting down holes on the claim, with a couple of men to help him."

"I heard Walter say that he wanted to join in the search for your father. Will you take him along?"

"Oh, no; why should we? Uncle Sandy and I can follow up what information we get as well as a dozen could. Besides, Walter will be busy for a long time yet getting that meat into Dawson."

"Well," assented the Parson, "it seems to me that your plan is a very good one. I wouldn't be afraid to have you and Long Sandy start together for the North Pole. And I believe you'd find it. But, Viva, I want you to come with me to-morrow for a three or four days' mush up the creeks. I want to gather up my congregation, establish preaching stations, visit the sick and the sinful, and pursue the timid and the recalcitrant church member to his lair. I'll strap a couple of robes on my back and we'll investigate the forty-nine different methods of cooking beans. Will you come?"

"Sure I will," cried Viva, jumping up and scattering bits of buckskin, skeins of silk and spools of thread about, which Kitty immediately began to pick up. "I'm no good at this work, anyhow, and I may be able to help you in yours. When shall we start?"

"I'll be along about daylight and eat breakfast with you before we go."

To Viva this trip up Bonanza and Eldorado—the first of many she was to make with the Parson up the gold-bearing creeks—was a delight and a revelation. She was learning to look and to listen—to see and to hear. In the caribou hunt and her short trips around Dawson she had greatly enjoyed herself, but now the Parson was along to open to the eyes and ears of her soul many beauties and harmonies to which she had been blind and deaf before.

For instance, the frost crystals. A few days before the sun had shone with unwonted warmth through the still air, and on the south side of all the trees and bushes had brought out the moisture; and then, the cold shutting down again, each bush and twig was transformed from wood to crystal. No jewel of man's manufacture ever sparkled with half the luster.

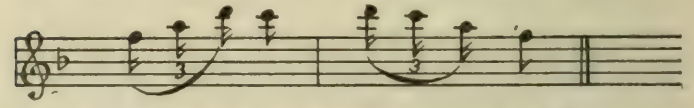
The mysterious law of the frost had been the Parson's special study. With microscope and pencil he had analyzed and sketched a hundred different forms of the snowflakes and frost-crystals. That which at first he had doubted as being a mere fancy of some imaginative naturalist, he now accepted as a common truth. Each kind of wood had its own particular set of frost crystals, so that after a while he could detect from afar the different kinds of trees and bushes—cottonwood, birch, alder, spruce, fir, tamarack, blueberry, raspberry—by the shade of silver in which it was encased caused by the different shapes of the crystals. It was a never-ending study of special delight, and to Viva, seeing and understanding this mystery for the first time, the whole world this morning cried aloud with joy.

The keen air, as they swung along, whispered angelic messages into their ears. The exuberant health of their splendid frames, with muscles rippling and playing under satiny skin, made a trip of twenty or thirty miles in a day an intense, physical pleasure. When added to this was the ever-varying beauty of hill, sky, forest, snow-draped bush and the frost crystals, they flew along the icy paths with growing enjoyment.

"Dear Parson," the girl would say, "I'm as happy as an angel flying along the Milky Way and discovering new worlds."

But the pleasures of another sense were added to those of sight in such perfection that their joy in this tramp became ecstasy. Day after day the Parson had been noticing, as he swung along the frozen trails, the different musical sounds of the frost—the resonant booming of the ice guns from the long cracks suddenly opened in the ice of the rivers and from the bursting of the fir trees at a temperature of forty to fifty below; the fairy-like tinkling of the icicles and frost-laden twigs against each other—silvery, delicate and high; and the screaming—shrill, yet not unpleasant—of the sleighs and sledges of the miners as they hauled their provisions or were hauled by their dogs along the beaten trails.

But the sweetest music of all was the tinkling, mandolin tones of the frost under his feet as he sped along the ice of the creeks and rivers. On the coldest mornings, when the thermometer showed fifty below zero, the tones were very high and shrill:



At thirty below there was a decidedly different set of notes, and this, again, was distinctly higher and shriller than in zero weather:



As the sun rose higher, and especially in the middle of a cloudless day, the notes grew more muffled and lower, sometimes almost a minor strain:



"Help me to keep those tones and half tones in mind," he said to Viva as they sped along, "until we get to Payson's cabin. We'll take dinner there. He has his mandolin with him and he'll write down the music for us. He has done this for me before, and we are getting quite a lot of these scales. I'll write an article on it some time for a musical magazine."

The trail, smooth and hard from the tramping of many moccasined feet and the gliding of many sleds, led from Dawson up the Klondike on the ice three miles to the mouth of Bonanza Creek. Here the trail entered thick woods with here and there a cabin. A mile or two further a large, well-built cabin, built and occupied by reporters and newspaper men, poured a fusillade of invitations upon the two travelers.

Eight miles from Dawson the cabins grew thicker along the trail, and for thirty miles Bonanza Creek was a continuous village of low log cabins, built of small logs chinked with moss, and covered with dirt roof. There was no floor in most of them, and, like the cabin of John Alden in Puritan Pilgrim times, "the windows were made of paper, oiled to admit the light." Some were of oiled muslin, and still others—in the more pretentious cabins—where of beer bottles, in-

geniously set in frames and carefully chinked with moss to keep out the cold.

There was no furniture in the cabin except bunks made of poles where the blankets were spread for sleeping, a few chairs fashioned of boxes, a narrow table under the window, formed of pegs set in logs and fragments of boxes or whipsawed boards laid upon them, and the inevitable little sheet-iron Klondike stove.

" These cabins are dens and each one has two or three bears in it," said Viva.

" But these bears don't hibernate," replied the Parson. " They are very wide-awake."

For near each cabin, from early morning till late evening, was to be seen a man working at a rudely made windlass, letting down a square bucket and drawing it up again full of gravel. Down the shaft was another man with pick and shovel filling the buckets by the light of candles. And in the woods adjacent there was generally a third man " rustling wood " for the fire, which must be kindled nightly to thaw the frozen ground, and thus enable them to sink the shaft and " drift " along the pay-streak, if it were located.

The man at the windlass was most in evidence—a picturesque figure, dressed in woolen mackinaw, woolen pants with overalls to protect them, puddling-like moccasins enclosing three or four pairs of heavy woolen socks, his head protected by a fur Klondike cap and his hands by fur-lined gloves. He was generally seen dancing about on the dump, stamping his feet and threshing his arms to keep himself warm. As to features, he was unrecognizable, only his eyes, nose

and mouth being visible, and these almost concealed by bristling bunches of frost on mustache, eyebrows and lashes.

The Parson and his brisk little companion stopped at almost every cabin to renew old acquaintances, make new ones and gather information. A hearty welcome met them everywhere, and when it was known that the famous huntress who had furnished the meat supply for the camp was present the greeting was doubly fervent. Often Viva found hanging in the pole shed or cache in front of the cabin the carcass of one of the deer she had killed.

On one claim the man at the windlass was a lawyer from Chicago, much given to repeating passages from Omar Khayyam, which he shouted down the shaft to his partner, an eminent surgeon from Pennsylvania, who hurled back Shakespearean shafts; while the third partner—an Irish Paddy fresh from the bogs of Killarney, who knew not the name of either poet—was chopping wood on the hill and sliding it down to the claim. Gold mining levels all the ramparts of society.

The bewhiskered and befrosted lawyer, passing a jovial time o' day with our two mushers, said in answer to a question as to his luck, "We have the most remarkable claim in the Klondike."

"How's that?" asked the Parson.

"Why, there is positively no gold in it."

"How deep have you gone?"

"That's another remarkable thing about our mine. It is bottomless. We have gone down sixty feet and no sign of bedrock."

"Have you got below the frost?" asked Viva.

"My dear Diana, the Huntress, this whole country is frozen all the way down to he—I beg your pardon; I meant to say, all the way down to the icy Dantean Inferno."

At noon they came to the cabin of the College Boys, twelve miles from Dawson. The firm declared a half holiday at once, and Fatty, casting prudence to the winds, cooked a sample of everything he had in the house, manfully bringing forth his last can of milk, and sacrificing without a tremor their one canned pudding, designed for Christmas.

"You saved my life with that caribou," he said to Viva. "Payson and Saunders had got so exasperated at the unvarying diet of Klondike strawberries (beans) and Yukon turkey (pork) that they solemnly decided to boil and eat me—they had roasted me already. I tell you the case was desperate. But when I served them the first caribou steak with brown gravy they acquired a grin that hasn't faded from their countenances yet. I owe you my life. It is yours. Do what you will with it." And he fell on one knee before her, his hands thrown out in a gesture of supplication, but with a fork in one and a dish towel in the other.

"Don't make your proposals so public, Fatty," laughed the girl; "and please serve the dinner; I'm famished."

"We're on the pay-streak, Dominie," said Payson. "See here?" and he drew from under his bunk a milk can full of the beautiful red Bonanza gold. "It is not very rich yet, but we think it is improving. If it keeps up this way all winter we'll not make fortunes,

but each of us will have enough to put him through college."

"You have done wonderfully well for green boys," said the Parson, "and you'll do better yet. But, Payson, we have something more important than gold mining to attend to just now. Get your mandolin and write down the music of the frost-harps as Viva and I heard them to-day. Come here, Viva, and let us get this right."

And the three were soon absorbed, patiently going over and over again the scales as nearly as they could be reproduced by a man-made instrument, for the half and quarter tones, the minute fractions of an interval which their ears could detect and their memories retain were not to be exactly copied even by such a master of the mandolin as Payson.

"Ah, the unapproachable music of the frost!" sighed the Parson. "The violinist or prima donna who could render those indescribably delicate tones and variations would be an artist beyond any who has yet appeared upon the stage."

"Oh, Dominie," protested Payson, "you're visionary; you're an extravagant idealist. No audience has heard the frost-music or could hear it as you hear it. Even we boys who love you and love music are just beginning to hear these sounds."

Scotty's lay was not far from that of the College Boys, and the Parson was rejoiced to see on the twisted countenance of his Scotch-Irish friend the expression that was known as the "Bonanza Grin."

For the experienced miner had picked his lay with all care, after careful measurements and sight-

ings and studies of the producing claims above and below, and of the shape of the enclosing hills; and his good judgment was evinced by the fact that his very first shaft plumped right down upon rich pay. Walters was paying the wages of a man to help Scotty until he could bring to camp all the caribou meat, and Scotty was rejoicing in the surprise he had in store for his partner.

Scotty always lapsed into broad dialect when pleased or angry. "Come on ben," he cried. "Ye'll see a sicht'll glad ye're hairt. Come doon the shaft, an' Ah'll gie ye a crack at the gowd yersels," and, taking a couple of gold pans with him he led the way down the ladder. Searching the sides of the "drift," he showed them a thin streak fairly yellow with the particles of gold mixed with the gravel. He helped them pick the panfuls of "pay dirt"—"ane for th' meenister an' his Kirk, an' ane for th' bonnie lassie to help fin' her feyther."

Returning to the surface and panning out the gold in Scotty's tub, the Parson had one hundred fourteen dollars and Viva seventeen more.

It was dusk when the two mushers reached the Forks, where Eldorado Creek flows into the Bonanza.

"An' is it yerself?" called out a cheery feminine voice when they entered the largest house in the village, which bore the legend "Grand Forks Hotel."

"Sure it's myself. I'm glad to see you."

"Aren't ye the man who showed us the totem poles in days long by? Don't ye remember the stewardess of the steamboat, who guided the ilegant ladies to yer door? It's Catholic I am, an' may

St. Mary forgive me for harboring a heretic! But ye are just as welcome as if ye were my own praist." And the buxom Irish woman led the Parson, with Viva following, through the group of men around the bar to her own sitting-room at the other end of the hotel.

As Viva stepped into the room a huge St. Bernard dog rose to investigate, and then with a bark of welcome and vigorous tail waggings danced ponderously about her.

"Why, Cato, old fellow, I'm glad to see you again. Shake hands," and the big white paw went into the small brown hand.

The Irishwoman, who had hardly noticed the small figure following the Parson, stopped short and stared at the girl, a smile of surprise and admiration spreading and spreading over her broad face like a breeze over a dimpling lake. Then she flew at Viva, enveloping her in a voluminous embrace.

"An' is this the little Lady of the Gun? All the saints bless ye! It's an angel of God ye are, and ye'll not stir from this house to-night. Shure, Cato has been coaxin' me this fortnit back to go down an' see ye an' the two dogs. An' the fat deer ye sent! 'Twas a big price ye paid for the use of Cato. No other man in the wor-r-rld but Long Sandy could have got me dog, but ye'll have him now wheniver ye'll be nadin' him," and she bustled about, tidying the room and bringing the one rocking-chair of the creek to Viva.

"I am glad to have found you, Miss Maloney," said the Parson as they sat at the supper table, "and I'm going to tell you just what I am after. I want to establish a preaching place at the Forks, and you

have the only house big enough to hold the crowd that I hope will come. May I hold meetings in your bar-room?"

The Irishwoman laughed with a musical heartiness that was refreshing to hear. "Yer're shure ye'll not be wantin' a drop yersilf to warm ye after yer long mushes?"

"You can't find anything behind your bar that's half so refreshing as this fine coffee," he said.

"Well, well," she answered, "let that by. Ye can have my house wheniver ye want it. Gather yer crowd, an' I'll see that ye have good seats an' a good fire; an' I'll put me wet goods under the counter to keep from distractin' the eyes of the congregation while ye hold forth. An' if ye'll bring this darlin' colleen wid ye every time I'm thinkin' the house won't hold yer congregation.

"Now, there's yer rooms, an' the best beds in the house, an' a hot meal an' a warm welcome for both of yez, wheniver ye come this way." And thus the Parson established his regular meeting place where he held services all winter.

"We'll leave our robes with you, Miss Maloney," said the Parson as he and Viva, hooded and moccasined, addressed themselves to the trail the next morning. "We're going ten miles up the Eldorado to Long Sandy's cabin. We'll be back here to-night."

Up this, "the greatest creek that ever was struck," they sped. Everywhere the claims were being worked on this little creek, which was only staked the preceding season as a forlorn hope by those who were too late to get in on Bonanza. But Eldorado proved to be

a "world beater," and the "Eldorado Grin" was even more expansive and inerasable than the "Bonanza Grin."

Past the claim of the famous Perry brothers they raced, stopping a moment at each cabin and to speak with the travelers they met. For all these creeks were the Parson's parish and he must know his parishioners. At the Lucky Number Mine they did not stop, for Lanky Bill had gone to Dawson for his gloves. Past the great Y. M. C. A. claim, Sagebrush Sam's, the Lucky Swede's and others of the "Eldorado Kings." Then beyond the cabins and the working claims and out into the cabinless expanse of Upper Eldorado. Here the trail was only a narrow path through the snow. The creek was lost in a number of little rivulets, fanning out against the mountainside.

At the extreme head of the little valley was Long Sandy's claim, and on it Sandy's little cabin—a mere prospector's shack, hastily built, small and dark. For Sandy would waste no time puttering around a cabin when there was a fortune to be made for his strangely acquired and rapidly growing Family.

The old miner was at the windlass when the radiant vision of his beloved Lassie burst upon him. And ere he could collect himself she had jumped up, pulled his head down and was rapidly kissing him upon the eyes—her favorite caress—and his.

"It's so long since I have seen you, you blessed old hermit! Where's Tom? Down that dark hole? Hello, Tom! Come up quick." And soon a happy quartet was eating caribou steak and beans and genuine sourdough bread in the little cabin.

"This is the second hole we've got down to bed-rock," said Sandy. "No colors yet. But I've an idea the gold is here. We're too near the path of the old glacier that ground off the top of the Dome to miss the pay entirely. At least I think so; and I'm going to keep on boring holes till I'm satisfied one way or the other. I'll hire two men to work with Son here when Lassie and I start after her father. We ought to get some news very soon now."

"Now, Uncle," began Carter; but the old miner spoke with finality.

"No, Son. You're not equal to it. You'll be of more use here, prospecting this ground and looking after May and Kitty," and the young man could only look his disappointment.

A return to the Forks in the evening, another night with the volubly hospitable Irishwoman, and an early start the next morning to visit the miners of Upper Bonanza. Here many friends, old and new, were found, the coming meetings advertised and the sick looked after.

Shorty and his partner, Pete, the T'ree Yons and Dutch Schmidt grinned welcomes when their respective claims were reached, and invited the travelers to stop with them.

"What a wonderful work and what a wonderful parish you have, dear Parson!" exclaimed Viva as they swung along their four-mile gait together. "I think you have the highest position in all the world."

"I wouldn't exchange it for any other," he answered. "It is a man's life. God grant I may be equal to my mission!"

At noon they came to the farthest working claim on Upper Bonanza, twelve miles from the Forks. This had been the Parson's goal all morning, for this was the claim of one of his closest friends, John Miller. The man had attended the first service at Dawson, and at several subsequent meetings he had been present, cheerfully mushing the twenty-eight miles to Dawson. His ruddy, bewhiskered face and prominent brown eyes had devoured the sermon. Religion was evidently a very real and vital thing with him, and his hearty invitation brought the Parson here to-day.

The two visitors ate with keen zest the light biscuit, the evaporated potatoes and juicy ham that were tendered them. "What a lovely child!" exclaimed both the Parson and the girl, as soon as their eyes grew accustomed to the dimness sufficiently to see the objects on the walls.

The little girl was everywhere in that cabin. First, a sturdy cherub of three, with curls and dimples and tiny teeth showing, she smiled at you from the window casing; now, in checkered dress and white stockings, she enticed you to laughter by her own roguishness from above the table; here, sedate and shy, a little maid of seven, she stood beside the picture man's head-rest with self-conscious pose; yonder, between mother and father, with a hand held by each, she seemed a living link of love.

"Yes, that's my Mamie," said Miller. "She's the light of my eyes. That's why I'm here. She's the reason I left my express wagon in Brooklyn and joined the crowd. She's the only child God gave us, but she is worth any dozen that ever lived. See this, and this,

and this?" as he brought the tin cans of gold from under the bed. "It's for her. When the trail was hard and grub was scarce I saw her bright face always ahead of me; and the way grew easier and my hunger fled thinking of her. There never was such a girl before and never will be again."

"I'm glad that you think so much of her, John," said the Parson. "I never knew a father to love his children too much; only I hope that you don't talk that way to her when you are with her."

"Oh, for that matter," laughed Miller, "we brought her up right; but it has been an easy matter. She never needed training; she just loved her way into the world and loves her way through it. I'd leave her without fear in the hands of any neighbor we have got, for they all worship her. If anything should happen to Mamie—" and his voice faltered.

"Do you know, it is almost a year since I kissed wife and Mamie good-by, and here's this Canadian Government with all its Mounted Police, and its boats in the summer time, and its mail teams in the winter, and not a letter has got into this camp. I had the chance of selling out this last summer for thirty thousand dollars, but I set my stake a little higher than that. When I've sixty thousand dollars I'll go back home and start a nice little business, and that will see my girl through college and out into the great world."

And so the man went on, not only during this visit, but all the other visits that the Parson made to his cabin, or that he made to the Parson's at Dawson. The unvarying theme was Mamie, Mamie, Mamie, with infinite tenderness and variety of anecdote. The

Parson was a fond father himself, and therefore did not tire; but constantly there came before him the thought like a shadow of evil—what if the mails when they came should bring bad news to this splendid man?

Back to the Forks that evening again and another night at Miss Maloney's.

"Shure, an' it's a great musher ye are," she said to Viva; "sixteen miles, then twenty, an' to-day twenty-four; an' ye that chipper an' light on yer feet as if ye'd been takin' a lovers' stroll of half a mile. It's a wonder child ye are!"

They were off on their return trip the next morning long before daylight and reached Dawson before noon. The frost was still keener, the frost music higher and sweeter, the frost crystals more wonderful than before.

There was in joyful Nature and in their own exuberant health and spirits no premonition of the shock that awaited them when they came to Nestlenigh Cabin. For little Kitty met them in the storm shed with white face—and their own went white at the news: "Auntie May is awfully sick, and the doctors say she has the typhoid fever!"

XX

WALTER'S QUEST

"IT is going to be a tedious case," said Dr. Chamberlain, the tallest and oldest of the four physicians who had been holding a consultation over Mrs. Randall. "The good lady has been nursing these typhoid cases, and so got the infection. She kept on visiting them after she had the fever herself, and thus aggravated the case. She has a very high temperature and terrific headache."

This verdict was rendered in Schofield's cabin, on the evening of the next day after the return of the Parson and Viva from the Creeks. Father Justus and Mr. Bowman, the English missionary, were present. Walters had just come in with another load of caribou, and a messenger brought in Long Sandy.

"Her illness is a calamity to the whole camp," said Father Justus. "I have met her constantly in the cabins of the sick and she has been a daily visitor at the hospital. There is not another person in the town who would be so sorely missed."

"We are all afflicted in her illness," assented the Parson, "and the question now is, how is she to be taken care of? We have good physicians; but the medicines and foods, and—most important of all—the nurses?"

"There are medicines enough," the physicians said;

"and a diet of milk and whisky is all she will need, at least till the fever breaks. Of course we'll have to do with canned milk."

"We have plenty of that for her needs," said Long Sandy, "if she hasn't given it all away to the sick;" with a questioning glance at Viva.

"There is some left," she replied, "and we'll save it all for her."

"Big Bill Magee has sent me a case of whisky that he has been concealing from the knowledge of the Klondike Kings," said Dr. Chamberlain. "He says it is fifty years old and a hundred per cent. pure, 'and then some'; and it is to be used only for Mrs. Randall and her family. What he thinks of the lady is evinced by the fact that he could get a hundred dollars a bottle for it."

"It comes, then, to the question of nurses," said the old priest, "and Mrs. Randall herself is the only trained nurse in the camp."

"Kitty and I will be her nurses, if you'll only show us how; but we are such ignorant little ninnies when it comes to anything like this. If just loving her would make Aunty May well, she would be up to-morrow;" and Viva's eyes were brimming.

"Mrs. Schofield can help some, but her health will not permit her to do regular nursing," said Schofield with a fond look at his wife.

Mr. Bowman broke in eagerly: "We have a trained nurse at Forty Mile who came out from England last summer to take charge of the Bishop's hospital. If the Parson will preach in my church till I return, I'll start to-morrow with my dogs and try to induce the

Bishop to send her up for this case. The Yukon is not in very good condition yet, and it may take eight or ten days to make the round trip—it is fifty miles to Forty Mile."

And thus it was arranged. Dr. Chamberlain had charge, with the little Doctor assisting him; the latter giving almost his whole time to Mrs. Randall's case.

The two girls on tiptoe with anxiety to do their best were installed as nurses in six-hour shifts, the few ladies who were at Dawson rendering occasional assistance.

Uncle Sandy and Walters removed their own belongings to the Lieutenant's quarters, and fixed up their small cabin for the use of the girls when off duty, and for the possible nurse; the old miner looking after the fires and the cooking, and feeling to the full the sweet sorrow and anxiety of family care.

The Parson hovered about Nestlenigh Cabin, helping when he could, and praying with a fervor he had never known before that this precious life, which he now knew to be irrevocably entwined with his, should be spared.

And thus the well-beloved lady, lying in her wolf robe in Uncle Sandy's cabin, started on the fearful, specter-haunted journey of Typhoid, through its ever-darker corridors of pain, and delirium, and weakness and emaciation—a journey whose hardships and perils love and care could alleviate, but not prevent or shorten.

One night early in the first week of December the Parson, wearied by a hard and anxious day, was about to retire when there came an imperative knock at his

cabin door. Outside he found a strange cavalcade—four laden sleds with strong dog-teams and accompanied by or carrying ten men and one woman, the caps and mustaches of the men and the hair and harness of the dogs gray with frost. Five of the men wore the uniforms of the Mounted Police, two the mackinaws of miners, two were Indians, one of whom was Chief Toozle, and the other white man was Mr. Bowman.

"We came to you first," the young missionary said, "to give and to get news, before going to the Post or to the cabin of your friends. This is Miss Castle, the nurse; she will stay as long as she is needed."

"My news is simply the progress of Mrs. Randall's disease," answered the Parson. "It is a quite violent case, the fever high and the patient delirious much of the time. Miss Castle, it is as an angel of mercy you come to us. God bless you! You will be quartered in Sandy's smaller cabin with the two girls, and can go there at once and find a good supper and warm berth. Now, what is your news, Mr. Bowman?"

One of the policemen stepped forward with a letter. "It is from the Recorder at Circle City, sir," he said.

The letter was brief and definite:

"The man you are hunting passed by Circle in a rowboat the first of last July. He made some purchases here and went on down the river. He stopped at Fort Yukon, sixty miles below, and hired an Indian who knew the country to the West. They went down the Yukon together.

"Within the last week this Indian has returned and reports that Mr. Carroll is sick in a cabin 'two sleeps'

from the Indian village on the Upper Koyakuk. The two had rowed their boat to the mouth of that river, which is the largest northern tributary of the Yukon; and had poled up the long and crooked stream until the ice began to form. Then they built this cabin, and began to prospect for gold, in a region where a few miners from Circle have been prospecting for several years.

"As soon as the ice formed on the creeks and rivers, the Indian started for his home at Fort Yukon overland, leaving Mr. Carroll and another white man, whom he had taken as partner, in the cabin. Mr. Carroll was already sick with the scurvy and unable to travel.

"The village on the Koyakuk is a little over five hundred miles west of Circle or eight hundred miles from Dawson. Old Toozle knows the trail well and could guide Mr. Carroll's friends to his cabin."

The Parson read the letter and acted quickly. Going with the party, he left the three sleds of the Mounted Police at the Barracks, and conducted Miss Castle to the little cabin. Viva was in bed, but started up at their entrance, it being Kitty's watch with the sufferer.

Going to her the Parson kissed her on the forehead. "Put on your moccasins, my child," he commanded, "and come with me to the Lieutenant's. There is news."

Stopping only to welcome the English nurse and direct the willing Bowman how to warm up the already prepared food for their supper, Viva hurried out with the Parson.

They found Long Sandy and Walters, who had heard of the arrivals, just starting up to the little cabin. The Parson drew them back to the Lieutenant's.

"Let me read the letter aloud, dear child," he said.

When he had finished Viva was looking from one to the other with piteous, frightened eyes, like a wild thing, caught in a trap, which sees the hunters gathering around it. Then throwing herself into the old miner's arms with a burst of tears, she cried, "Oh, Uncle Sandy, what shall I do, what shall I do?"

Long Sandy sat down on his bed, drawing his lassie upon his lap and soothing her with gentle touches and tender words. But the young lawyer came up at once with shining eyes and vibrant voice.

"Miss Viva," he said, "there is but one thing to do. You cannot leave your aunt, and Sandy can't leave either of you. I will start immediately, and I will bring your father back to you."

Long and anxious was the conference, the Lieutenant and Schofield joining the council, and old Toozle being called in and questioned.

The chief was eager to go. Viva was his angel, his saint whom he worshiped always and whose wish he would obey absolutely.

"Me plenty savvy trail," he boasted. "Me ketchem squaw Koyakuk."

"How many sleeps?" asked Sandy.

The old Indian pondered, counting on his fingers and nodding his head. "You takem big dog?" pointing to Brutus and Cassius who were curled up on a caribou skin in the corner.

"Yes," answered Walter, displaying three fingers.

The Indian put up both hands twice, with fingers displayed—" S'pose plenty good sun," he said; then both hands and one hand—" S'pose too much cole."

" Twenty or twenty-five days each way according to the weather," Sandy interrupted.

" Oh, poor Daddy! " moaned the girl, her heart torn between love for her father and love for her aunt. " If he knew I was at Dawson he would sooner expect the United States to become an English colony again, than that I would stay away from his side when he needed me."

" Viva," spoke up the Parson, " if your father could know all the circumstances he would expect you to do just what you are going to do. Scurvy is seldom fatal and is slow in developing. Typhoid fever is swift. violent and dangerous. Your aunt is approaching the critical stage of the disease. Walter has proved his strength and ability on the trail, and his devotion. You can trust him to do everything that you could do to find and bring your father here."

The others joined in the same strain; but it was not until Uncle Sandy spoke that Viva yielded. " Lassie," he said, " if it were a question of fighting the cold or danger or distance or hardship, you and I would go to the end of the earth to find and help your father. But here is something we can't fight. Let Walter go. May needs us both.

Once the question was settled Viva threw herself eagerly into the preparations for the journey.

" Oh, Walter," she said, taking him by the arm with both hands and bearing her weight upon it in a truly feminine way, " you mustn't think I mistrusted you.

I'd rather trust Daddy with you than with anybody else in the world except Uncle Sandy and myself. You'll bring him to me, won't you?"

"Viva," he murmured, forgetting the others as he looked into her eyes, "if I'm alive and your father is anywhere in Alaska I'll find him and bring him to you."

"When will you start?" asked Schofield.

Walters looked inquiringly at Long Sandy. "You'd better make it day after to-morrow morning," the old miner decided. "We must send to The Forks and get Cato."

"I will write Miss Maloney to-night; she promised me the dog whenever I needed him," said the girl.

"I'll start men up Bonanza early in the morning to bring him," volunteered the Lieutenant. "If it were not for these cursed rules of the Police Service, forbidding us to stir outside of Canada, I would go with Walters myself."

"Viva," commanded Sandy, "set Kitty to work making moccasins for the dogs. "I'll ask Mr. Bowman to get some from his Indian women. Make them of the skin of the legs of the caribou, dressed with the hair on. And it will be well if we can manufacture a blanket apiece for the dogs. These St. Bernards can't stand cold like the Malamutes. You'll have to let them sleep in your tent on caribou skins, Walter. Sixty below will freeze these 'Outside' dogs if we are not careful. Too much depends upon them to take any chances."

"Now, let everybody get to bed," suggested the Parson, leading the way out of the house with Viva.

The reason for the eagerness of the young missionary to go to Forty Mile after the pretty nurse burst on the Parson's mind when he and Viva surprised the two sitting in close proximity to each other, with the self-conscious look of children caught purloining sweets. " Now, don't worry, my dear child," he said to Viva as he bade her good-night. " God is in this, and we are going to see your aunt restored to health and your father brought home."

There was more of ceremony attending the departure of Walters on his difficult quest than any other event in which The Clan had been interested since Skagway days. Scotty and Payson came from their lays, the former with the Bonanza Grin still widening his face.

" I'll have a snug little poke o' dust for ye when ye come back," he whispered to Walters. " An' ye'd better tak' this wi' ye"—slipping a small but heavy buckskin sack into the young man's pocket. " Some o' the fellows to the West may not understand greenbacks, but they all know a nugget when they see it."

Mr. Bowman, happy enough from his midnight conversation with the pretty nurse to cheerfully do without sleep, had run the three miles down the Yukon to the Indian village at Moose Creek, roused his dusky parishioners and set the women feverishly to work making the blanket coats and moccasins necessary for the comfort of the " horse-dogs," as they called the St. Bernards.

Little Kitty arose to the occasion, as she seemed increasingly able to do, with two pairs of fur-lined moos-

hide gloves of cunning workmanship, which she had been surreptitiously making for Christmas presents but gave now to Walters—" One for you and the other for Viva's father."

Miss Maloney herself brought Cato in response to Viva's note, coming, as she said, " to see my little Lady of the Gun, an' give her aunt a spell of Irish nursing."

Uncle Sandy surrendered his famous lynx robe and his tent and stove, and busied himself all day and night looking after the food, harness and equipment of the dogs and the outfit of Walters and Toozle.

All day, as he worked, the thoughts of Walters were on the coming " little talk " he meant to have with Viva alone. Over and over his heart rehearsed the scene, and thrilled or shivered with alternate hope and fear. The girl was an unsolved mystery, an ever-growing wonder to him. Sometimes she seemed a sexless boy-girl,—a hunter-friend, fearless, expert and daring; and again she would seem all woman—tender, sweet, loving and true, with depths of passion in her that could be stirred were the right man to come into her life.

There had been nothing in their frank and unconventional comradeship hitherto that could serve as an index to her feelings toward him. She had treated him, so far as he could see, exactly as she had treated the other men of The Clan; and only to the Parson and especially to old Sandy had she shown anything like womanly affection; and there it was the love of a daughter.

But such love as that would not satisfy him. With

his whole soul he loved her; with mind and heart and body he desired her as his mate, his other self, his companion for time and eternity. His dreams were sweet with her, his waking hours crowded with thoughts of her.

And he wanted her here and now—in this big, raw, new land that sounded forth its challenge to the strong and brave, and laughed its derision at the cowardly and weak. This girl was so at one with the country that she seemed to be the embodied spirit of the Northwest, meeting joyously and overcoming its rugged mountains, its foaming rivers, its wild beasts, its savage fastnesses, its bitter cold.

In his bolder visions he saw her living her life with him here, winning and making a home here, rearing here sons and daughters who would typify the freedom and independence, the height and breadth, the greatness and purity and spiritual power of this splendid land.

But so deep was his reverence for the girl thus strangely brought into this wilderness and into his life, that he would not for the world have her influenced toward a choice of him by gratitude, or sympathy, or anything less than the same kind and degree of love he felt for her. And this must come to him without constraint or persuasion, as freely and inevitably as his love had gone to her.

It was the sympathetic Kitty who arranged that Walter should have a visit with Viva alone. After the multitude of details of the coming journey had been arranged, and sled, dogs and outfit assembled at the Lieutenant's, the Parson, Miss Maloney, Uncle Sandy,

Walter and the two girls had a midnight spread and cup of coffee in "Snuggle-up Cabin," as Kitty had named the smaller shack. Miss Castle, her fellow conspirator, brought sudden word that the patient was "more rational, and wouldn't the older ones come in and talk with her a few minutes?"

Walter wasted no time. The instant they were alone together he sat down by Viva and took her hand. "Little comrade," he said, "have you nothing to say to me before I go?"

Her strong little hand clasped his with steady pressure. "Why, I've plenty to say, Walter," she replied. "Here is this big letter I've written to Daddy. Give it to him if—when you find him. And if—if—he shouldn't be able to read it himself, please read it to him. And tell him all about us, and that nothing in all this world could have kept me from going to him except just what did happen."

"But, Viva dear, don't you know that—that is not what I mean? Can't you see my heart and know just what I wish to be to you? And doesn't your heart respond to mine?"

"I hardly understand you, Walter," she replied. "We have been such good chums that I don't see how we could be any better friends. But if you bring my dear Daddy back to me it seems as if I could hardly refuse you anything then."

"Oh, my Darling, my Darling," he cried, shaken with his disappointment, "you break my heart. I want nothing from you—nothing at all—if it must come as a payment for anything I am able to do for you or for any of those you love. This journey I am taking

deserves no praise and no reward. It is what any real man would do for any woman.

"But can't you see that I love you as a man loves only once in his life—that you are my North Star to which my whole being turns—the earthly shrine at which I worship; and that nothing else in all the world counts to me but you and your love?"

"I do love you, Walter," said the girl, and her arm slipped around his neck and her fingers tightened on his. "I love you more than I love any other man—except, of course, Daddy and Uncle Sandy and the Parson. What more could you ask than that?"

All the strength of the strong young man was needed then to hold himself in leash. The touch of her arm and her hand—the nearness of her lips to his—his whole soul cried out with longing to take her in his arms—to kiss her lips—to try to awaken in her by his ardor some response to his passion.

And yet he knew that her woman's heart was as remote from his as the North Star from the Earth, and that nothing he could say or do would bridge the distance. Toward him and toward all men her heart was still the heart of a child.

Faint with the stress of his soul's struggle he bowed his head against hers for a moment. Then gently slipping her arm from his shoulder and taking both her hands in his he touched his lips to her forehead.

"That you can ask that question, dear girl," he said, "proves that there is nothing more that I can ask. Forget what I have said—until your heart remembers and understands and responds—and be my brave, true little hunter-chum, as you have been."

And in his sense of defeat, as presently he bade her and the others good-by, there was no bitterness against her—rather an added reverence. But for himself he felt reproach that he had allowed his tongue to utter words of passion to ears that could not hear them.

When he was dressing in the very early morning Long Sandy buckled his own belt around Walter. "There is a thousand dollars, my boy," he said. "Buy an outfit at Circle for all the rest of the trip, for you will find no stores beyond. Hire help where you need it. Don't push these dogs too hard, and don't take any desperate chances in the coldest weather. You would only endanger Mr. Carroll's life as well as your own by rashness."

Then, as the dogs were harnessed, and the sled, shrilly complaining, was pointed down the river, the old miner wrung his friend's hand and leaned his head down to whisper, "Don't despair, my boy. Lassie will wake up some day, and when she does it will be you that she will see."

Through the days and weeks of the long man-hunt that followed, Walter's mind was wholly upon his quest. To find Viva's father for her, to save him and bring him back to her—that seemed to him more worth while than all the gold in the Klondike, than any earthly office or honor, than the conquest of nations or the establishment of an empire.

Compared with this Sir Galahad's quest of the Holy Grail seemed trifling and absurd. That was only for the spiritual satisfaction and the salvation of the soul of the hunter. This was to save another and to give

happiness and peace to her whose happiness seemed of infinitely more consequence than even the salvation of his own soul. He had come into that higher love that "seeketh not its own."

The toil and discomforts of the long mush through the wilderness grew to be a pleasure to the young man. The struggle with the cold and the rugged difficulties of the mountain trails were as stimulating as a battle to a patriot. His training in trail-craft while bringing in the caribou meat stood him in good stead.

His great dogs—Cassius, as the better trained, acting the rôle of leader, Brutus of "swing-dog" and Cato, the heaviest of the three, of "wheeler,"—all three, good-natured, well-fed, plucky and remarkably free from "dog-jealousy," were in perfect accord with their master and delighted to do his bidding.

The old Indian, as he plodded along, tireless, silent, alert, with an intuitive knowledge of the right thing to do in camp or on the trail, seemed to know Walter's feelings and purpose, and to be in all things at one with him.

They made Forty Mile the first day, and the fifty miles farther to the new camp of Eagle on the Alaska side the next day. Then came the stretch of one hundred and eighty miles to Circle City—with camps in the snow. Down the Yukon from this point for three hundred miles, the river ice growing rougher and the trail mostly obliterated by newly fallen snow and having to be broken anew with snow-shoes. Then across rugged mountains, through narrow gorges, up and down small streams, the course ever northwestward. Here the progress was slow and difficult, and

often tremendous work for a whole day would accomplish only a few miles.

The weather grew frightfully cold. To breathe the air was like breathing granulated ice. For a whole week it was sixty below. The men did not mind it, but the dogs must be carefully handled, lest feet and lungs should be frozen.

Christmas eve brought the frost-covered travelers to the Koyakuk Indian village, and a halt of a day was necessary to make inquiries and provide food for the dogs. Then " two sleeps " brought them to a deserted cabin and a dim trail leading from it farther up the Koyakuk. Five days more of anxious and weary searching through the savage land in the vise-like cold; and New Year's Day discovered a little pole shack, snow-covered and dark; and in it a death-stricken man, with blackened legs and blackening body; with toothless gums and blotched and bloated face; with dazed and stupid mind and hopeless, emotionless heart—almost too far gone to comprehend that help and care and messages of love had come.

XXI

CHRISTMAS CHEER

"IT is very absurd to talk of having Christmas in the Klondike," grumbled Schofield. "All the essentials are wanting."

"What do you consider the essentials of Christmas?" inquired the Parson.

"Why, everything that this camp lacks. Children, in the first place. Imagine a Christmas without children!"

"And stores at which to buy gifts," added his wife.

"And wax candles, and spangles and candy and toys for the tree," said Kitty.

"And choir boys to sing carols," and the eyes of the English nurse were full of dreams of Old England.

"And sleigh-bells, and dancing and fun," chimed in Viva ecstatically.

"And eggs for the Christmas pudding and cake." It was a very faint voice that said this, and all turned their heads with loving smiles towards the bed of the invalid.

It was three days before the great Christian festival, and the Schofields and the Parson had come to Nestlenigh Cabin by special permission of the doctors, for an hour's visit. The little Doctor was there "on duty" and Long Sandy was attending to the fires and the general comfort. Nine people filled the cabin pretty full.

For, a week ago, after a full month of high temperature, of pain and delirium, the turn of the disease had come and Mrs. Randall's fever had broken. She was still fearfully weak—so weak she could hardly lift her hand an inch from the bed for the Parson's tender clasp. Her life was only a tiny flame that a little draft or breath might extinguish, and must be sheltered and guarded day and night with the utmost care.

But the reports of doctors and nurses became better day by day, and hope grew to assurance. The whole camp rejoiced and sent its messages of congratulation —for there was nothing else in all the camp to send that was suitable for an invalid.

"To my mind," contended the Parson, "there is absolutely nothing wanting in this Christmas that is essential to its good cheer. Haven't we all received the richest Christmas gift that our hearts could possibly desire—the life of our dear Mrs. Randall? That, with the perfect health we enjoy in this splendid winter, is Christmas gift enough for anybody. And we are not so impoverished but we can do something out of the ordinary for the poor fellows in St. Mary's Hospital, and for others in the camp. And by all means let us have the Clan together for a Christmas feast."

"Goodness! Where will we put them?" exclaimed Mrs. Schofield and Viva together.

"That is our greatest problem," admitted the Parson, "but I think it can be solved. Schofield, can't we get the use of the long building of the Mounted Police?"

"Captain Considine and his wife are preparing a feast for the members of the force and will probably have use for it," was the reply.

"No, I think not," the Parson persisted. "So many of the police are away that their dining-room will give them all the space they need for their tree and feast. Schofield is the house committee," he announced. "Sandy will look after the stoves, while Viva and I will be the programme committee."

"But how will we get the Clan together?" asked Viva.

"The plan will be something like this," he answered; "I shall strike up the creeks to-morrow to rally the Clan. I shall go to Sandy's claim first and bring Carter down to Dawson with me; I think I shall go up to Miller's cabin on Upper Bonanza and invite him; he is in such a state of anxiety about his wife and child, a little diversion will do him good. I will rely on you, Viva, to pet him up and put some life in him. Then I shall visit the T'ree Yons, Shorty and Pete, and Dutch Schmidt, although I cannot invite them to the Christmas Tree."

"Of course, you will bring Scotty and the College Boys," said Kitty.

"Oh, yes, I'll notify them as I go by and come down with them, or probably send them down ahead of me. I shall hardly get back to Dawson until the morning of Christmas Day. Old Sandy, here, will have to take charge of things and get everything ready by Christmas Eve."

Again the faint voice came from the bed, "How about the caribou meat?"

"Set your mind at rest on that subject, dear May," answered Long Sandy; "the thin-chested College Boy has stopped stampeding, and is getting fat as a porcupine hauling in and gorging himself on the caribou Lassie shot. Two hundred fat caribou have been added to the bill of fare of the Klondikers."

"My dear child," said the Parson, going to Viva and patting her shoulder, "you have done more than all the doctors or all the preachers in the Klondike to give health and courage to the people of this big camp. You will never know until the Day of Judgment just how much good you have accomplished with that little gun of yours."

"The good Lord deliver me from ever having to slaughter so many of His innocent creatures again," said the girl. "Their big liquid eyes haunt me still in my dreams."

The little Doctor drew his watch with a significant gesture toward the bed.

"All right, Doctor, we are overstaying our limit. Good-night, my dear lady," said the Parson, going to the bed and taking the thin hand of the invalid; "I will send Fatty Lee down to-morrow, and if you are able to whisper him a little advice on the subject of dried-apple-and-caribou mince pie, and the best way to make Christmas pudding with evaporated eggs, it'll save the boy very many blunders; he will have to be our chief cook in your absence. But don't let your mind worry one bit about this Christmas; we are going to have the time of our lives, and bring something of the Christmas spirit into the Klondike."

Outside the door he and Sandy, with Schofield, had

a little conference. " Your idea is a great one," said the old miner. " The whole camp has the dumps and needs cheering up; many of them are making their fortunes, and the pay-streaks on all the creeks are yielding surprisingly, but all cheer seems to be absent from the camp; half the boys in the hospital are dying of homesickness."

" Yes," said the Parson, " we had a very sad example of that the other day; you knew of the funeral I held yesterday? "

" Yes," said Schofield, " I attended it and heard your little talk."

" Well," resumed the Parson, " that young man came in early with a good outfit and had a very promising lay on Bonanza; there did not seem to be any young man in the camp with better prospects; he was found in the morning with his pistol in his hand and the top of his head blown off. All the explanation given for his desperate deed was a little scribbled line in his handwriting, ' I am tired of it all.'

" The Clan has a special mission just now to infuse a little spirit and courage into the camp. I wish we were in a position to have a great general meeting and Christmas hurrah; but the Pioneers will be using their hall that day and we will have to confine our feast to a very small circle."

The next morning was one of the coldest of the whole winter. Sixty degrees below zero, registered the government thermometer at the barracks, while the various thermometers brought in by the miners each had its own tale to tell. The mercury instruments had gone out of commission long ago and were frozen

up for the winter; the spirit thermometers showed from sixty below to seventy-five below.

The Parson's moccasins creaked cheerily up the trail. The morning was too exhilarating for mere walking; half the time he was running in the "Klondike Lope" used universally when it was fifty or sixty below. He could not stop long at any one of the many cabins of his friends. A word of cheer to the saw-mill men at the mouth of Bonanza; a hand-shake and Christmas greeting to his friends a little further on; a jovial word with the old California poet who had come with the Mounted Police from Circle and was wintering in the cabin of the newspaper men; a word of inquiry at the cabins along the trail where sick men had been languishing; and then, his first extended visit, at the claim of the College Boys.

"Still on the pay-streak," announced Payson in response to the Parson's question; "it is not very rich at any one spot so far down Bonanza as this, but it seems quite uniform; we are making good wages and hope for a fair clean-up in the spring."

The Parson announced the Christmas tree. "Fatty," he said to the jovial cook, "break off and hit the trail to-day for Dawson. Let Payson and Saunders get their own pork and beans to-morrow and you go down to Dawson and get your two comrades there to help you; get over enough stoves to the barracks to manage the dinner; consult with Viva and old Sandy; now get busy.

"Payson, you and Saunders stop work to-morrow, lock up your cabin here and take a two days' vacation. Bring your mandolin along. 'Twill do you good to see

the girls again and be relieved from the monotonous round here."

"You bet it will," said Big Saunders. "This constant digging down in that dark hole is getting on my nerves; I don't know what rash thing I will be driven to do if I can't have a change once in a while."

"Sure I will go," said Scotty, as the Parson came loping up to his cabin. The Bonanza Grin was still on the Scotch-Irishman's face. "A little nugget is a poor gift for the bonny lassies, but it's all I hae to gie'. I'll go down the day and help old Sandy."

Again the crisp trail and the cheery frost-music shrill and high under his feet. A barely five minutes' conversation with the busy Miss Maloney, as she bustled about the bar, shooting her arrows of Irish wit at the thirsty crowd who were weighing out gold dust and exchanging "josh" with the bar-maid. Then dinner three miles further on at Lanky Bill's cabin,—caribou steak and fresh grayling, the fish having been caught in a primitive trap spread across the Klondike in October as the schools went down the shallow stream toward the deeper water of the Yukon for the winter. Lanky Bill had a couple of barrels of them, and the Parson always looked forward to a meal of the delicious fish with joyful anticipation, whenever he visited his old Kentucky friend.

"I want you to come to our Christmas feast," invited the Parson. "You have heard of our Klondike Clan? Well, we propose to vote you in as a member and we want to inaugurate you now."

"All right," replied Bill, "if you don't have me say or do anything except just eat and look at the girls.

Say, set me alongside of little Kitty, can't you? She's my special chum. That kid has more real attraction for me than anything in the female line I have ever seen."

"Why, you are not falling in love with the child?" asked the Parson in dismay.

"Oh, no; nothing of that at all," said Bill. "She is more like a kid sister to me than anything else, but she sure is a smart one. You see these gloves she made me? Well, I paid her twenty-five dollars for them and I wouldn't sell them for five hundred; there is not another pair to match them in the whole camp.

"Say, Parson, I offered her a pan of dust if she would come and pick it; I know she can't come on account of Mrs. Randall's sickness; but I want you now to come down with me and pick the pan and we'll fix it for little Kitty's Christmas gift. We have opened up a richer streak than ever, and I'll help you select the pan."

Down the sixteen-foot shaft the two friends climbed, then along the lead for two hundred feet, and Bill stopped where a couple of workmen were breaking into the side of the drift which had been freshly thawed.

"Look at that," said Bill, indicating a streak of yellow mixed with gray some four inches in width, lying about three feet above bed-rock.

With an exclamation of surprise the Parson began to fill his pan; Bill, picking with a prospector's hand-pick, took the richest portions and tumbled them into the pan.

As they panned it in the tub of muddy water in Bill's cabin, the nuggets of greenish yellow grew more and more surprising. There was very little dust-gold in the pan; one nugget of eighty dollars rewarded their search, and the whole pan, when completed, weighed, at sixteen dollars to the ounce, five hundred and thirty-two dollars. Bill carefully put it in a small new buckskin poke and tied it up.

"Put that on the tree for Kitty," he said as he handed it to the Parson. "I'll tell you what I've been thinking. I'm an old bachelor on the shady side of forty, and too much afraid of women to ever think of tying up with any of them. I'll make my old father and my brother and sister happy from this claim, but it won't take, by any means, the bulk of my fortune. I'm thinking of giving it to little Kitty. I know she will never leave Miss Viva, but I don't see why I can't have a hand in educating the kid and making a fine woman out of her."

"Nor I either," assented the Parson. "Your idea is a splendid one, and the girl is worthy of all you can do for her. You know her history, of course?"

"Yes," growled Bill with a suppressed oath; "and I'd like to get the big brute who tried to do for her in front of my six-shooter just long enough to empty the gun."

"When will you go down?" inquired the Parson.

"When will you be going?"

"Well, I am going now to speak to Tom Carter up on old Sandy's claim on Upper Eldorado, and I will make it back to Miss Maloney's to-night; then to-mor-



BILL STOPPED WHERE A COUPLE OF WORKMEN WERE BREAKING INTO THE SIDE OF THE DRIFT

row I will go up and get Miller on Upper Bonanza and visit a lot of the boys, and I think that I will be coming past the Forks late in the afternoon."

"Very well," said Bill, "I will have my dogs down there when you go by and give you a lift back to Dawson."

Tom Carter was pitifully eager to obey the summons to the Christmas feast. "I don't know what Uncle Sandy will say about my mining operations," he said to the Parson. "Here the three of us have been working our best for six weeks putting down hole after hole and have not struck a blamed thing, hardly a color. The bed-rock is from fourteen to twenty-five feet deep here and the muck is very heavy and slow; it has been slavish work, especially for me for I am a greenhorn at it. I don't know how long the old man will want us to keep at it. This is eating up a big pile of dust and yielding nothing."

"Old Sandy will not blame you," said the Parson; "you are only obeying orders and doing your best. He has sunk too many dry holes to be discouraged this time; but he wants you down with him now. You can leave your hired men to go on with the work, but we want you to stay with us a week or so."

The face of the young man flushed with delight. "Viva, what about her?" he inquired.

"Oh, she is getting back her bloom and spirits since Aunty May is on the high-road to recovery. I am going to have her come with me on these trips up the creeks as soon as Christmas is over; that girl needs at least a ten-mile mush every day to keep her in good condition."

"But—Walter—does she seem to worry about him?"

"Oh, so far as that is concerned," replied the Parson, "you don't need to be jealous. I don't think the child's heart has ever been really touched; it is still the heart of a child. Naturally, however, if Walter rescues her father and brings him home he will have the advantage over the rest of you; but he is too much of a man and too good a sport to take advantage of the fact of his gallant deed and claim any reward for it. He will not accept anything but her free, unconstrained love, and there is no sign of that being yielded to him."

The young man's eyes were misty. "God bless her!" he said, "the days seem long since I have had a sight of her. Nothing else counts in this claim in comparison, and all of this slaving for gold is of no account to me unless I can win and lay the gold at her feet."

"Hit the trail, then, to-morrow," said the Parson, "or to-night, if you would rather, and go and help them all get ready for Christmas."

Down the trail again now, and it is after dark before he comes to his room in Miss Maloney's hotel.

"It's famished I am," said the buxom Irish woman, "for the sight of me dog and the Lady of the Gun. The Saints bless her and the sick lady and all! If it wasn't that the dust is coming into me poke purty fast, I'd go down to Father Justus, Christmas, an' confess the sins of me bar, an' get absolution for the rest of the winter."

An early start next morning, and the ribbon of the

trail unwound rapidly behind him as he sped to Upper Bonanza and Miller's cabin. Again little Mamie smiled at him from the walls, and again he heard the miner's words of praise and longing for his darling.

"Yes," said the father, "I'll go. I am getting all worked up over not hearing from my wife and girl. If I'd known what a strain it would be, I'd have taken my thirty thousand and gone outside; but it is too late now and I can only wait for these slow policemen to bring in the mails. I will have my sixty thousand all right in the summer, and then no more separation for this life. This is a heavy price to pay for a fortune; too heavy!" and the miner's sighs were deep and pathetic.

They hit the trail again after dinner and stopped a little while with Dutch Schmidt, who, the light of the gold-lust in his eyes, showed the Parson eagerly the cans of gold under the bed.

"I haven't seen you at the meetings lately, Schmidt," admonished the preacher; "what's the matter? Sick?"

"Nein," answered the German, "I haf no time; I am on the pay-streak; I must vork."

"Now, my boy," said the Parson affectionately, with his arm over the German's sturdy shoulder, "I am afraid that it has got you."

"Vat hass me?" asked the German.

"The gold-lust; the love of money, the root of all evil."

"You vait," said the young man, "I vill gif you blenty for your Shurch after vile; I cannot shtop vile it's coming so fast in de pans."

Shorty and Pete greeted the Parson with grimy hands and loud words. "You must not neglect the black sheep of your flock," said Shorty; "they need feeding and shearing as well as the white ones."

"I don't look upon such good fellows as you as black sheep by any means," the Parson replied; "only don't let the spirit of the camp get you as it has Dutch Schmidt up here," and he repeated Schmidt's words.

"Well," said Pete, "I don't see anything else in this —— country but the gold that's worth while, and it's mighty little of that Shorty and I are getting."

"Haven't you found the pay yet?"

"Well, we've just sunk our sixth prospect hole, and got our first pan that seems anything like good pay to-day. I think we have got it, but nothing big; if we get enough to go out with and buy a little ranch apiece, Shorty and I will be content to settle down and dig for potatoes instead of gold the rest of our lives."

"I don't know about that," said Shorty. "I have an idea there is something waiting for us on the Alaska side yet."

"Ah!" sighed the Parson, "it's getting you, too. You want to resist the devil of the gold and make him flee from you."

"I'd rather take him as a pet dog in my cabin," said Shorty with a laugh, and the Parson went on down the trail.

It was getting dusk as he came to the cabin of the T'ree Yons. The Swedes were not at work on the claim. The opening door, in response to his knock, revealed an interior floorless and crude, but bright with the light of a dozen candles; these were set in miner's

candlesticks and bottles, grouped around a little spruce top which was standing, a miniature Christmas tree, on the table. The little tree was bare of all ornament except a few bits of glass hung on strings from the branches, and some fragments of a red flannel shirt tied here and there about the tree to give it color. Two of the Yons were sitting at the table, and evidently their heads had been down in prayer, and tears were in the eyes of all as they greeted the Parson and Miller. The pathetic little scene gripped the Parson's heart.

" I see you have the Christmas spirit even up here, men," he said. " Have you families at home? "

" Ya," answered Yon Yacobson, " me got five, he got seven," pointing to Yon Yonson, " and he, only t'ree, he too much young," pointing to Yon Yensen. " Ve tought ve ban make leetle Christmas; ve tank of home to-night."

" God bless you and the dear ones so far away," said the Parson, hardly able to command his voice.

Miller's eyes were streaming as they hurried down the trail.

" That was too much for me," he said after awhile; " I wonder what my wife and Mamie are doing to-night. They will be at the Church with a lot of other bright and happy people, but I'll bet their thoughts are all with me in this God-forsaken land."

" Don't call this country by any hard names," said the Parson. " It's just as much God's country as Brooklyn is, and the people in it are just as surely God's children. You will bring your wife and child here some day and show them where you got the sixty thousand of a fortune."

Lanky Bill was waiting at the Forks, and after a supper at Miss Maloney's hotel the three friends took the trail for Dawson. It was a wonderful night, this Christmas eve of '97. There was no moon, but the stars were of a startling brilliance. And the Aurora! Great feathery bands of white light clear across the sky, slowly shifting, glowing and fading, as if they were the wings of the angels of Bethlehem! The electrical sounds that accompanied the changes of the light were like the swishing of seraphic pinions. The very spirit of the Prince of Peace was in the pure, keen air.

The dogs held a steady five-mile pace, and the men ran joyously with them, one riding on the sled, one at the gee-pole, and the third setting the pace ahead, relieving one another as the breath of the runners grew short. Winding with the twisting creek, flashing out into the open places, shadowy and mysterious as ghosts in the woods, no pause, no weariness—the very fullness and ecstasy of life is this—a winter night-mush in the far Northwest.

Although it was an hour before midnight, yet as they swung around the point just above Dawson City, songs of the College Quartet smote the air gratefully. The boys were singing their Christmas carol in front of the English Church. As the travelers drew nearer they heard the same songs before Nestlenigh Cottage. They were old familiar Christmas songs, "Heilige Nacht," "Joy to the World," "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem," and others of the fine old hymns. As they drew up at the barracks the quartet had already marched down the street and they heard strains of

"Ave Maria" sung for Father Justus' benefit down by St. Mary's hospital.

"Bless the boys!" said the Parson. "I haven't heard anything sweeter in all my life."

A call at Snuggle-Up Cabin found Viva and Kitty still up and Long Sandy and the Lieutenant there.

"We have been to services at Mr. Bowman's Church," said Viva. "Kitty and the little Doctor stayed with Auntie May while Miss Castle and I went. The quartet furnished the music; it was fine. We are all ready for the feast. Fatty has been running in to consult Auntie May until we had to make him stop. They have concocted some wonderful dishes out of scanty material."

"Come down with me to the Catholic Church," said the Parson; "we'll help give Father Justus a midnight congregation."

Here again the College Quartet furnished the music to the delight of Father Justus and as many of the hospital cripples as were able to attend. After the service, the quartet with the Parson and the girls went to the hall of the hospital, and the sweet music of the carols wafted their message of hope and peace to the sick ones in their cots.

"You have done us all a world of good," said Father Justus, "I am almost minded to think that you are all children of Mother Church after all."

"Surly we are," replied the Parson; "children of the Universal Mother and we'll sing these songs in the City of Gold together."

Christmas was one of those matchless days found only in the keen North. The sun did not rise above

the hills, but there was daylight for three or four hours, that softened sunlight so grateful to the eyes. A morning service at the English Church was participated in by both congregations; then to the barracks for the great feast.

The chief difficulty about preparing the caribou roasts, the Christmas pudding, mince pies and cakes, was the lack of stove room. Fatty Lee had brought over the Klondike stove from the College Boys' cabin and installed it in the long barracks room. The Lieutenant had given his stove, and the stove at Snuggle-Up Cabin was requisitioned; but these were all some distance apart and required much running to and fro. All the stoves were small, requiring the division of the Christmas pudding into several small ones. The bunks in the barracks were temporarily removed and a long table installed, and here the members of the Clan assembled.

The little doctor stayed with Mrs. Randall during the feast, and to the doctor were carried viands from the table, and to Auntie May some genuine cow's milk brought up by the Indians in a frozen state from the Bishop's cow at Forty Mile.

Before the dinner the young missionary, Miss Castle, the Lieutenant, Lanky Bill and Miller were formally voted into the Clan. When the Constitution was read and the clause requiring a motto apiece from new members, there was embarrassment.

"I know nothing about rules," said Lanky Bill, "except just to keep a-digging." He was applauded and Schofield wrote the motto. Miller who sat next to him, with the vision of his beloved ones and his

distance from them sore upon him, gave as his—" Quit when you have enough."

" Be merciful," whispered Miss Castle.

The missionary stood up, blushing to the roots of his hair. " The motto that is nearest to my heart just now," he said, " is this: ' It is not good for man to be alone.' I wish to announce the best news in the world to me: Miss Castle has just accepted me as her future husband."

The applause and congratulations, which lasted for several minutes, put the Lieutenant rather in the background. But Scotty, calling the noisy ones to order, said, " Now, Lieutenant," and he arose as if responding to a toast. " I propose this," he said, " as the motto has just suggested itself,—' keep Christmas always with you.' "

Wonderful were the viands and wonderful the appetites that demolished them. The dried-apple-and-caribou mince pies were voted superior to anything ever tasted before; the plum pudding, for which a few raisins and prunes had been found and lime juice and evaporated eggs, with some powdered cinnamon begged from the storekeeper, but minus the burning brandy, was pronounced a wondrous success. The juicy caribou roasts and the Christmas cake without frosting were equally successful. Evaporated potatoes and the inevitable " Klondike strawberries," were served in tin platters. There was genuine sourdough bread made by Long Sandy in Mr. Bowman's more capacious stove and spread with Sandy's last roll of butter. Fatty Lee was overwhelmed with compliments. The disappointments, the longings, the isolation, the distance from

home were all forgotten; the whole world was present at the feast. Here was " inside " and all of the rest of the world was " outside."

A full programme was carried out after the feast. Jolly songs by the quartet, Kitty accompanying on the baby organ; recitations by Viva, Miss Castle and the Lieutenant; a song by Mrs. Schofield; funny stories by her husband, Miller and Scotty; and then the benches and table were set aside, and by Scotty and Viva, Carter and Kitty, to the Scotch tune played on the mandolin and whistled by the quartet, the " Highland Fling " was danced as Dawson never witnessed it before or since.

All except Miss Castle, who resumed her place at the invalid's bedside, went down to the hospital afterward and re-enacted the scenes of their own feast, including the duplication of viands and the programme, for the cheer of the patients, some of them joining in with supplementary performances of their own.

" It was altogether worth while," said the Parson, as the two girls with Long Sandy and Tom Carter gathered around the stove in Snuggle-Up Cabin. " We carry our Christmas with us, and part of the camp, at least, has learned to-day that no wind of misfortune and no breath of fever is able to extinguish the Christmas candle. The Clan has fulfilled its mission of cheer."

But as she lay in her bed, Viva breathed a sigh not altogether of weariness or of content. " I wonder where he is," she murmured, and it was not of her father she was thinking.

And through her dreams persistently ran the three

great dogs and the old Indian chief, and before them the broad-shouldered, blue-eyed, jovial-faced young lawyer, speeding under the North Lights, over frozen wastes, on the mission upon which her love for her father, and the young man's love for her, had sent him. And in her heart was awakening something she had never known; and her prayer at the bedside and as she awoke in the morning, repeated again and again, was " God bless him and keep him and bring him back to me."

XXII

THE FUTILE GOLD

THE Parson was growing moody. A persistent, depressing thought was seldom absent long from his consciousness, fight against it as he would. Thus would his mind go wandering even when playing chess with the Lieutenant at the barracks. He would stare at the board without seeing it, until his companion's brisk " Your move, sir," would recall him to earth with a start and an apology.

Even in the place he loved the best, the cheery room at Nestlenigh Cabin, with its white walls and bright bits of color; Viva talking over the adventures of the day; Kitty exhibiting the latest triumph of her needle; and, best of all, the gentle convalescent, Mrs. Randall, with her inquiries about the sick and her advice as to their help and comfort—even here his mind would, as the girls said, " go glimmering " until rallied by them back to smiles and cheerfulness.

This obsessing thought was the futility of all this tremendous strife for gold, and the impotence for comfort or blessing of the gold when it was obtained.

As he lay awake at night and visioned anew the scenes of the Chilcoot trail, the thought sat oppressingly upon him like a nightmare. He saw again that army of men like boats adrift—cut loose from all the anchors that had held them—and with sails set

at all angles to all the winds of heaven. The wrecks were innumerable; the successes very few. And yet the same goal loomed—a treacherous mirage before each one—the little yellow lumps locked with icy bands in the frozen recesses of this forsaken nook of the Northland.

And upon the river, or even before that in the lake camps, money could do little or nothing for a man. It could not purchase for him immunity from accident and disease, or even from famine in this wilderness where the food was not to be had.

One after another instance of this helplessness of gold would flash upon the screen of his memory. Halfway down the Yukon where they tied up for the night he saw in a hastily constructed shack by the river a flag of distress, and, stooping through the narrow doorway, he found a scurvy-bloated man, with teeth falling from swollen gums and legs blue-black. At the side of the narrow doorway was the sign, "Twenty Dollars Offered for a Potato"—and there was not one to be had.

As they approached Dawson—a scow-load of men with short outfits—they passed men in poling-boats, swaying and pushing against the current and through the ice-cakes, in a frantic effort to escape from the Northland to the coast before the river should freeze.

"Turn back, you fools," they heard a big voice shouting. "Turn back,—you! There's starvation and death before you in the Klondike—no grub. Half the camp is going to starve before the spring. They'll mob you for your food."

"Why," shouted Shorty, "is there no gold at Dawson?"

"Damn the gold," replied the boatman. "What good is it? You can't eat it!"

The lesson was repeated as they neared the great camp, and endlessly reiterated when they got to Dawson. Here were tons of gold in buckskin pokes, in canvas bags, in tomato cans and match-tins—plenty of gold. To some of those who had it it had come as a surprise after long years of stampeding and digging. In the pursuit it seemed the sum of all things good; in the attainment it was but a feeble and futile thing. The hundreds of dollars of it that winter in Dawson could not buy an onion or an egg, a potato or an orange, a lemon or an apple.

This futility of the gold caused it to become in the purses of many a thing to be disdained, despised and carelessly thrown away. The Parson remembered seeing a great, broad six-footer, staggering from a saloon door with a heavy gold sack in his hand, slip on the ice and go sprawling. His buckskin poke, striking upon a sharp edge, burst wide open, and his dust—hundreds of dollars of it—went flying all about. The bystanders, observing that unwritten law of the mining camps which always respects property rights, formed a circle to guard the gold. The drunken man, assisted by a comrade, made awkward and spasmodic efforts to reclaim his dust, raking it together, mingled with snow and dirt, and placing it in an empty sack. A boy of twelve stood by, watching with keen interest his clumsy efforts. The miner soon grew impatient.

"Here, boy," he called; "you can have the rest." And the wondering boy, rushing into a cabin for a gold pan and a blower, soon had scraped up more gold in value than the money which most of the men who stood around had expended upon their whole outfits.

Every day the same sad lesson was reiterated. There were calls for very many things that were not to be had—locks to secure men's cabins, latches, hinges and staples to hang and fasten their doors, glass for the windows, oakum and finishing paper to make snug the walls, nails and screws wherewith to fasten furniture, tools to work with. The ordinary implements—knicknacks that seem essential to the plainest life—all were wanted here, and gold could not procure them. Father Justus in the hospital had no mattresses or springs for his beds, no delicacies for feeble stomachs, no instruments or bandages or appliances for his operating room. Gold everywhere; but nothing of value that gold was able to accomplish!

As the winter tightened upon the land, this futility of the precious metal weighed upon the Parson's mind until it became an obsession, and he, himself, turned from the gold with loathing. It could do so little—so little—for the men about him. Disputes arose, thefts and other crimes were committed, even murder; but there were no officers to enforce the laws and no adequate laws to enforce. Rumor had it that certain officers had gone upon wild stampedes into the Atlin country, up the Big Salmon, and up Stewart River, instead of pursuing their appointed way to Dawson to take care of that great camp. The gold could lure

them to the rainbow's end, but could not bring them to their duty.

To the physical suffering which the gold dust could not alleviate was added the keener and more fatal distress of mind. Month after month passed, with men pursuing their way up and down the river with dog teams. Two hundred government dogs were halted at Lake Tagish, or set to hauling government officials on wild-goose chases. Tons of letters heaping up at Skagway, at Bennett, at Tagish, and not one message from business partner, from wife or parent could find its way to those homesick thousands in the Klondike! A large Mounted Police force brought there and supported by the gold; and yet no letters from home! Gold aplenty at Ottawa, on the Pacific Coast, along the trail and in all the creeks of the Klondike; but not a letter for six months to a man of all those thousands!

" This is the last straw!" protested Payson, one day in the Parson's cabin at Dawson. "I have a sister back in California; and I can stake my soul that if she is alive she is writing me a long letter every week, and I can't get one of them. I have sent a few to her at a dollar apiece for the small ones and two dollars fifty cents for the long ones. I hope they got safely out to the coast."

" Maybe some of them did," answered Schofield. " Word has just come by a man who was stopped by the ice below the Hootalinqua, and who has just come in with his dogs, that he found five or six hundred letters, many of them opened, some of them completely soaked and unintelligible, many of them torn in pieces, distributed on the snow by some one of the

carriers to whom we paid a dollar a letter for taking them out."

"The Captain has made a list of the carriers," said the Lieutenant, "and he is going to try to trace the scamp."

"A short rope an' the limb of a tree is what the mon needs," growled Scotty, who had come down to Dawson with Payson, "an' I'd like to be the one at the other end o' the rope."

And so the camp grew more and more despondent and grouchy and quarrelsome as the gold came in greater quantities. Up the creeks where men were working hard there was more optimism. The play of muscles and the sweat of the brow banished despondency. Those who could find no claims or profitable lays could at least get one dollar and fifty cents an hour for their labor. One could bear an unvarying diet of bacon and beans, a rough bed of poles and a squalid cabin, when the gold was heaping up in his cans and the fruition of hopes long cherished seemed at hand.

But in general the discouraging features of the camp were predominant, and the thought of the utter uselessness and foolishness of the mad quest for gold would come seeping into the pores of the Parson's brain until it became a phantom of dread. He grew to despise—almost to hate—the dull, heavy dust in the cans and buckskin pokes.

"What good is it? What good is it?" he questioned over and over as he padded in his moccasins along the icy creek trails, until the question fell into a weary rhythm with the crunching snow. The gold-lust became

in his thought a fearful disease, more loathsome than scurvy, more deadly than pneumonia, more insane than typhoid, more enthralling than dipsomania. He grew actually fearful lest his strong, lovable young friends, Walters, Payson, Schofield, Dutch Schmidt, and the rest should "strike it rich," and the gold-lust, inflamed and excited but never sated by acquisition, should taint and wither their splendid manhood and rob them of their physical and moral strength and beauty. For them he constantly offered up Agur's sensible prayer—"Give me neither poverty nor riches;" never for himself, for he felt only disgust and fear of the gold.

"What do you or I want with a fortune?" he would ask them. "We have never learned the trade of a millionaire. It would only fill our lives with care and trouble, and perhaps make fools and weaklings of us."

It was only after a visit to Miller's cabin that the Parson grew in a measure reconciled to the gold-dust. The lovely face of little Mamie in her many poses smiled away his fears. She was so sweet, so innocent, so bright and loving—surely no amount of gold could tarnish the luster of such a jewel—it would only make a fit setting. Miller's fierce and growing purpose to get—get—get—for Mamie inspired a like longing in the Parson for his success. That this sweet little flower of humankind could by any means be spoiled by too much wealth seemed abhorrent to every thought of her; and the Parson began to hope that Miller's fortune of sixty thousand dollars would be realized, and that he would be able to go back next summer to his darling

with the means of educating and keeping her from want through all her life. While he was with Miller this bright vision stayed with him; but when away, mushing the lonely trails, would come surging back the deadly fear, "What if something should happen to the child while the father is away from home?"

The Parson could never take the hopes and fears, the joys and disappointments, the pleasure and the pain of any human being, especially of any of his friends, lightly. He must ache with their pain and laugh with their gladness. Little Mamie seemed almost like his own sweet daughter. He sturdily chased away his fears and began to long on Miller's account, as well as upon his own, for the coming mails.

"It is a year now," grumbled Miller, "since I left home, and I know that my wife is writing every week to me; and yet I have never received one word. God knows there is plenty of graft and red-tape and dishonesty in the United States; but this Canadian Government can give us all odds and then beat us in graft. What are those two hundred dogs and all those *coureurs de bois* and the Mounted Police doing all this winter, with tons and stacks of mail piling up at Skagway and Tagish, and our hearts breaking for lack of them?"

The Parson swung back to town, the twenty-eight miles from Miller's cabin, one keen, cold, clear day in early March.

The various tones of the frost-harp beneath his feet varied, from the highest in early morning, to almost the lowest producible note at noon, ascending toward evening as he drew close to Dawson. Bursting into

Schofield's cabin, with eyebrows, fur cap and hair white with frost, he was the picture of ruddy health.

"Great news, Dominie!" called Schofield. "The mail has come. I was up the river getting wood when the three sleds passed me. The tall, lithe couriers, one of them swinging ahead in an easy, yet rapid lope, setting the pace for the dogs; the other holding onto the handle-bars behind. They came fifty miles to-day and brought thirteen sacks of mail. We'll get our letters now. The news is already flying up the creeks, and you'll see the miners come pouring in from all directions. Six months since those of us who came in last have heard a word from home, and a year for many a poor fellow; and they say that only about one-fifth of the mail has come this time. The mounted policeman who brought these thirteen sacks took them haphazard from the pile at Tagish. Our mail will be as 'spotted' as some of these creeks."

"When will it be distributed?" asked Payson.

"To-morrow, I suppose," replied the reporter. "I have been a railroad postal clerk, and I know that with one or two fellows to help me I could have it ready for delivery by to-morrow noon."

"I doubt their getting it ready so soon," answered the Parson. "I understand that the Mounted Police are to handle it, and it is new work for them; besides, although they have had all winter to make mail boxes and to provide a post office, nothing has been done. These police boys are splendid fellows, but know nothing except their routine."

To-morrow saw the town filling up with eager faces.

The news had spread to the farthest creeks during the night; and here they came, a representative from every camp and claim in the whole region. By evening three or four hundred men had come to town for their mail. Schofield went early in the morning for news and came to the Parson's cabin discouraged. Payson, Scotty, Long Sandy and a few others were there.

"What do you think, boys!" he said. "There's a placard up saying that the mail will *begin* to be distributed to the miners one week from to-day. A whole week to assort thirteen sacks of mail! I went with two other men, all three of us experienced railroad postal clerks, and offered our services free to Captain Considine to distribute that mail, offering to have it all ready to-morrow. Our offer was rejected with scorn. 'It is a matter,' said the Captain, in his airy way with his chin in the air, 'for the Mounted Police.'

"I looked into the cabin where the Mounted Police were at work, or pretended to be, on the mail. It was a sight to make a Yankee weep. That lame sergeant, Lippincott, who froze his feet, you remember, on the stampede to Swede Creek, has charge of the mail. The mail-sacks were brought to the barracks, into the longest of the log buildings; and there on the floor at intervals of a foot was a long row of pieces of literal red tape. The mail-sack, full of letters, was dumped midway down this row; and the lame sergeant and two others of the Mounted Police, one of whom could hardly read, were on their knees, laboriously placing the letters on the strings A, B, C, D, and so on down.

When I was there some of the piles, such as D and J and S, growing top-heavy, tumbled over, and the policemen would laboriously, with clumsy fingers, tie them up with red tape. Then, when another missive beginning with the same letter would turn up, he would untie that string of red tape, slip in the letter and tie it up again. No boxes, no system, no haste; arrogant and insolent stupidity—that's what I call it!

"We stood in open-mouthed wonder, and when we ventured to make some suggestions out of our experience we were simply fired out, and informed that the Canadian Government was doing this, and we had no business to 'butt in.' After they get the mail all tied up in those bundles in that stupid way, they are going to carry it down to the Green Tree, which they will turn into a post office, and then, a week from now, we will begin to get our letters. And all of these miners who have left their windlasses and shacks to come forty or fifty miles for their mail have either to waste a week's time or go back to their claims and come again. It's beastly."

"Eh, mon," said Scotty, "it's not stupidity; it's graft; you'll find out. Some of these miners an' all the saloon-keepers will get their mail before the week's out, or I'm mistaken."

"I think you are surely doing them an injustice," defended the Parson. "They are simply awkward, well-meaning men."

"We'll see," persisted Scotty.

The next day the Parson, going up toward the police headquarters to investigate, met his friend, Big Bill McGee, with a great bundle of letters, tearing them

open as he came and scanning the postmarks and addresses.

"Why, Bill," said he, "how did you get your mail?"

"Oh, an ounce," said Bill, passing on, absorbed in his mail.

The Parson was nonplused, and his faith in human nature and the Canadian officials received a shock. Presently he met Lanky Bill swinging down the trail with his bundle of letters.

"How does this come, Bill?" he asked.

"Oh, an ounce," replied Lanky Bill, passing on with his mail.

The Parson was discouraged. Plainly the Mounted Police were making capital out of the distress of the miners. Most of the miners he knew to be short of funds. They had put every dollar that they had with them into their claims. Three-fourths of these gold seekers were working "lays" up the various creeks. They had staked all they had upon the venture, and were living upon the outfits which they had brought in. Many of them had dug hole after hole to bed-rock without striking a "pay-streak," and were now depending upon funds sent in to them from "outside" to keep them going, buy the lumber needed for their sluice boxes in the spring and pay the workmen for sluicing off their dumps.

To be forced to the alternative of losing a whole week in waiting for their mail, or bribing these police-men to get it handed out "on the side," was atrocious. With all the gold in the Klondike these men had been unable to get a letter all winter; and now that the

partial mail came they could not get what belonged to them without bribing these servants of the public for special favor. He thought of his own home letters, those from his Board, the many friends "in the States," from whom he must hear, and his sense of honor contended with his eager longing for his letters.

"It is not fair!" he said. "It is not just! Nothing in all my experience in the United States compares with this in sheer brutality of selfishness and greed."

But then the thought struck him, "These poor, underpaid, faithful Mounted Police, compelled to see vast quantities of gold dust brought up from the mines which they must not work as public servants, compelled to guard and police this gold and not able to get any of it; to see the pick-and-shovel men laboring for the wealthier ones get a dollar and fifty cents to two dollars an hour—five times the salary of the Mounted Police! What blame to them if they chose to make a little tobacco money by working overtime in assorting special mail for special persons?"

He walked up the trail to the Barracks and stood before the door. Then his sense of fairness brought him back to his cabin; then his eagerness for the mail drove him again to the Barracks.

Lippincott greeted him with a smile and a hearty handshake, hobbling from chair to chair to meet him. "What can I do for you, Parson?" he asked. "You see we are hard at it."

The Parson repressed a smile at the absurdity and stupidity of the whole business. "How are you getting along?" he inquired.

"Oh, pretty well," said Lippincott. "We're new at this business, and I suppose the poor fellows out in the streets and coming in from the mines are cussing us good and plenty."

"Yes, they are," replied the Parson; "and you can't blame them. Many of them have mushed in—a two days' journey, only to find that they have to wait a week for their mail. To some of them it is a matter of life and death, and to a few much more than that. Their very heartstrings are tied around these letters—messages of more purport to them than all the gold in the Klondike, and they can't get them."

"I'm sorry," said Lippincott, "but we can't help it; we are doing the best we can and obeying orders."

The Parson hesitated, the conflict in his mind growing fiercer. Lippincott read him like a book and hobbled over to him, holding by chair and table and window sill as he came on his sore stumps of feet.

"Parson," he said in a low voice, "I'd do anything in the world for you."

"Well, Lippincott," ventured the Parson, "I know you fellows have a chance here to make the money that ought to be given by your government freely; and I can't blame you. I haven't an ounce, but here's a five-dollar greenback that I have saved all winter. Will you take that and let me have my letters?"

"Come to-night at nine o'clock," said Lippincott, pocketing the bill.

The Parson hung his head in shame. Returning to his cabin through the crowded streets, he was halted again and again by eager friends who wanted to know

the news. All he could tell them was that the mail was being slowly distributed in an awkward way. That night, keeping his tryst with Lippincott, he received a little bundle of eight letters, with the whisper: "Keep this quiet."

XXIII

THE MAIL

THE letters were "spotted," as Schofield had foretold. The faithful daughter at home had written him every week, and numbered her letters. There was in his little package no series of more than two or three letters without a break. Here was number two, numbers five and six, number eleven, numbers nineteen and twenty. Eagerly he tore them open and devoured them. The first news from the outside world in six months!—loving messages, scraps of information; one letter from his headquarters, but half unintelligible because of the missing letters. His heart sank as he thought of the possibilities of disappointment and heartache to that great camp in such a mail as this.

An eager knock sounded on his door. He opened it, there was Miller. "I mushed into town to-day," said his friend. "They brought the news early this morning that the mail had come. When can I get it?"

His face fell when he learned the day on which the distribution would begin. "I hear that some are getting their letters on the side," he said, "but I have no money with me and no time. I am going back to the claim. Maybe they'll let my partner bring my letters out to me. I am bound to hear from wife and Mamie now—a whole year!" and his face looked gaunt and his eyes wild with anxiety.

"There's another placard up," spoke out Schofield, "that is more infamous than the other. It says that every one must come for his own mail in person, and that even written orders will not be honored."

"That means another long mush for me and plenty of precious time wasted," said Miller. "I wish I had brought a can of dust."

"I'll find you the money," offered the Parson.

"It would not avail you now," interposed Scotty. "Somebody has complained to Captain Considine and the graft has stopped; at least it has got to be done on the sly. Your gold is helpless again. It's no good in a case like this."

The Lieutenant quietly got and handed to Mrs. Randall and Viva what letters he could find for them. Their mail was fragmentary as the Parson's was.

The week was over, and the Parson, going down the street at ten o'clock the day the mail was to be distributed, saw a strange sight: A row of men, two by two, stretched for four blocks along the street, marshaled and kept in order by Mounted Police who were traversing the line here and there. The miners themselves saw to it that there was no "butting in." Woe to the man who tried to slip into another's place!

The Parson spoke to one he knew: "Hello, Hefner," he cried, approaching a thickset young German who had come all the way from Dominion, fifty miles. "When did you arrive?"

"Tree o'clock dis morning," replied Hefner. "I camped on dis line. It was two blocks long alretty, and I hafe been here steady since tree dis morning."

The clouds had gathered and snow was sifting down

upon this long waiting line. The miners were in motion, stepping from foot to foot, some of them singing to themselves, all of them patiently enduring. The snow was gathering upon cap and shoulder as the weary tramp, tramp, tramp from foot to foot, without progress, went on. The Parson strolled toward the post office. The door opened and sixteen men marched two by two in lock step into the cabin. Then a red arm shot out to bar the rest, and the door was shut. One by one, at slow intervals, those who had gone in came out at the side door, some of them with letters in their hands and some without any and a look of disappointment and almost despair upon their faces.

Some were angry. "We know there are letters there for us," they complained, "and they are holding them back until we bribe them."

Miller he found away toward the end of the line. The Parson's warm cabin and his own fatigue had made him oversleep. All day he stood in line. At five o'clock when the post office closed he was still a block from the door.

"What shall we do?" he asked one of the policemen. "Can we have this place in the line to-morrow morning?"

"We can't keep it for you," said the policeman. "If you keep it you'll have to stay here, or come before the rest get here."

"Bring me my robe from my sled and a little grub," he requested of the Parson. "I am going to camp right here on this trail."

The next morning the weary men who had camped on the line were stepping from foot to foot again

awaiting the opening of the door at nine o'clock, and then the same slow, aggravating, insolent routine was gone through. The Parson watched. At one o'clock Miller went in. With anxiety almost equal to his the Parson waited at the side door. Presently he stumbled forth, red-faced and furious.

"I did not get one," he said. "They tell me that the New York and Seattle mail-sacks were left out of this lot. I know my wife and Mamie are writing every week—A whole year!—a whole year!"

"It's hard and cruel," consoled the Parson, "but there's hope. Another mail is announced, to arrive two weeks from now." And Miller, with the optimism of one who loves, went back to his windlass.

Three weeks later another mail was announced; nine sacks this time. Again the letters "on the side" for an ounce; again the long line. Milder weather, this time, the men camping on the line from early night till the time of opening of the post-office door. Again the slow march two by two; a squadron of sixteen going in at a time, and going out by the side door.

Two days after the line formed the Parson said to himself, "I'll try again for more letters." Taking his place at the end of the line, only two blocks away from the post office now, he stood for three hours. Ahead of him was Jensen, a Danish friend who attended his meetings at the Forks.

"Why, Jensen," he said, "I saw you in town yesterday. Didn't you get your mail?"

"Yes," said Jensen, "I have been in twice. The first time I got six letters. I knew some had been

missed, so I tried it again, and late yesterday evening I got two more. Those awkward, bungling policemen had overlooked one bundle of the J's. Now I am going to try it again and perhaps I'll get some more."

The man behind Jensen said, "I can beat that. I have been in three times and got two letters each time. Now I am going to try and see if I can get two more."

The Parson sighed. Framing excuses for the Canadian Government and the Mounted Police was getting to be rather laborious work. Miller he saw away ahead of him, near the door, and presently he saw the door open and Miller disappear within. He waited for his friend in anxiety, and trembled for him. Somehow a premonition of coming ill shut down heavily over the Parson's spirit, but the necessity of maintaining his place kept him in line. An hour of waiting, and he was allowed to pass the red-armed policeman and take his place before the counter. As he expected, a little bundle of letters, overlooked before, was his reward. As he came out he looked for Miller.

"Scotty," he said to the Scotchman who was loafing about looking for a chance to gossip with a friend, "did you see Miller?"

"Ah," said Scotty, "I'm feared for that mon. He came out an' sat on yonder stump, an' opened first one letter and then another; then I saw him jerk down his cap over his eyes and hit the trail. I fear something is verra wrong."

The Parson went home with a heavy heart. Prayer meeting to-night; sick men to visit to-morrow; a trip

up Hunkerways the day after. He would wait for word from Miller.

When he returned from the trip to the creeks on the third day he found a message and a bundle of letters. "Read them in order," said Miller's handwriting, "and come."

With sad misgiving the Parson opened the little package of wifely letters. They were "spotted," as his own had been. Here two in succession, there an interval of two or three months, and then another. At first, placid and tender epistles, with details of home life, and many little stories of Mamie and her sayings, her school and her grades; and a little letter from the dear child herself, full of little else but "Dear Daddy," and "When are you coming home?" and "I miss you so!" And so through the summer with its playtime.

The wife had gotten two or three letters, sent out by messengers poling up the Yukon. Her letters rejoiced in her husband's success, but called him home.

"I am afraid to have you winter there in that terrible country. No matter if you don't make much in the summer, come home in the fall before the winter freezes you in. Mamie and I want you."

September and October letters were missing. Then one early in November. Wifely reproaches now, and intruding fears: "Dear John," it began. "I am scared about Mamie. As I told you in my former letters, the sweet child is growing thin. Her eyes are so big! She does not seem to be sick, but she is losing her bloom. I think part of the reason is that she is grieving for her Daddy so much. And she is grow-

ing tall so fast. I have taken her from school, because the doctors said I must. I am afraid! Never mind the gold, John; come home, come home! I am scared about our little girl."

And from Mamie a touching little scrambling echo: "Daddy, Daddy, never mind the gold. Come home!"

Another one dated the last of November. "Dearest John," it said, "why don't you answer my letters? Why do you stay in the Klondike, when I have told you that our little girl is fading away? The doctor looks anxious when he comes from her now, and shakes his head. She is very weak, but sits up every day, and is so sweet, so sweet! Even if you have to leave it all and drive the team as before, come home, come home, John!"

And so, another letter, with deepening anxiety. Then—the Christmas time. A little black-rimmed envelope—the anguish of a mother's heart—trying to excuse her husband, and yet wondering how he could risk the life-long bitterness of remorse for staying away from a dying child for the sake of more gold.

"You told me, John, that you could come with thirty thousand dollars. That seemed a great fortune to me; and I wrote you to take it and come; but you did not; and now it is too late! The river is frozen, and *Mamie is dead!*" A lock of the little one's hair and her last picture—and a last despairing but loving message from her to "Dearest Daddy!"

The Parson read with fast-falling tears. It was as if his own little one had gone. The pity of it—the pity of it! The futile gold!

He had been on the trail all day. Twenty-eight

miles each way was this trip. Two days of constant traveling were before him; but there was no hesitation. A hasty supper, and he struck the trail up Bonanza. At dusk Lanky Bill, making a night trip home after dispatching his mail, overtook him on the edge of town and gave him a lift. So he was now riding, with the four sturdy dogs and Bill at the gee-pole ahead, winding among the trees and spinning along the clear creek bed; then the Parson running ahead of the dogs, the other holding the gee-pole behind them; then Bill in the sled and the Parson at the gee-pole, making all haste. Seven miles an hour they sped, the dogs keen for home and the men keen on their quest.

The Forks of Eldorado now—sixteen miles. " Take the dogs," said Bill. " It is only three miles to my shack and it is twelve to Miller's cabin."

Hard plodding now, the dogs reluctant, disappointed of their kennels and their supper. The Parson urged them on with all his might, but it was long after midnight when he reached Miller's cabin. His lusty " Whoa! " would have brought his friend out at any hour of the day or night; but there was no response this time. With heavy foreboding, the Parson unhitched and cared for the dogs; then opened the door and went in. Miller sat on a bench with his head on the table, his partner slumbering in his bunk. The Parson came up behind him and gathered him as a mother gathers a child, into his bosom. He said not a word, and Miller too was silent. There were no words to say.

At last Miller sprang to his feet, rudely shaking off

the Parson's arm: "Curse the gold!" he shouted, his voice hoarse and unnatural. The Parson seized him by both shoulders with a strong grip.

"—— —— the gold!" raved the maddened man. "What use is it? What can it do for me now—or for her?"

The Parson led him back to his seat again by main strength, forced him down upon it and held him there. After a little, without saying a word, the minister gradually slackened the grip of his right hand and slid the arm caressingly across the man's shoulders—thence upward until his hand rested upon the hair of the stricken father, and moved gently back and forth, as a mother soothes her sorrowing child. Little by little Miller's muscles, hard and tense with his emotion, relaxed. His head bowed upon the table, and dry sobs began to shake his frame.

Then, in low, even tones the Parson began to talk:

"My own little lassie was proud when she got through her third grade at school and, being at the head of her class, was promoted to the next grade. The other little girls and boys were envious of her, for she was leaving them to be promoted. She outstripped them. Her mother and I were glad and proud of her promotion.

"Once she went to see her Grandma and was gone to that beautiful country place for a month. We missed her about the house but were glad to see her go away where we knew she was happy and gaining strength and health. Besides, we knew she was getting knowledge in the fields and woods that was essential to her true education. She was just as truly

our daughter—just as dear and close to us—while she was at her Grandma's as when she was romping and laughing through our home. We would have been selfish to deny her this chance of health and growth.

"John," he went on tenderly, his voice deep and vibrant, "your Mamie has been promoted to a higher grade. Mamie has gone to see her Grandmother. You haven't lost her. She is more truly yours than she ever was. She has better teachers, better training, more loving care than ever you could give her. What God has done to her is a simple, natural and beautiful thing. What your gold could not do for her the love of God has done. You did your best; you did it for her; but, some day, you and Mamie will talk this thing over, and you will acknowledge that God's plans for the education of your sweet child were the better.

"Don't curse your gold, John. It is God's good treasure loaned to you for use. Why, you can even have the happiness of helping somebody else's child with it, and there will be no element of selfishness in that. Don't curse your gold. Take it home to your wife, and plan with her how to use it for God's other children."

So all the rest of the night the Parson held Miller in his arms, and talked, and soothed him, until at last the man cried out, "I'd give the whole sixty thousand for one day with Mamie again"—and the dam of his grief burst and the flood came. There was something terrible in his weeping. Three nights of sleepless despair and anguish had brought the man to the point of madness; and the Parson, fighting for his life and reason, breathed a prayer of thankfulness when the

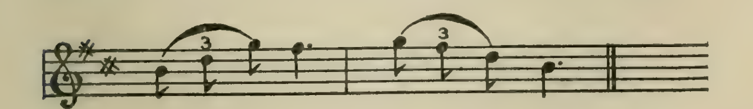
tears gushed forth. But he had never witnessed such a flood. It was hard to staunch. It lasted so long that the man had no voice or tears left.

At length utterly drained of his strength, but also of his bitterness and rebellion, Miller let the Parson undress him and lay him on his bunk. The Parson was only less exhausted. Miller's partner, a big-hearted Swede, his heavy face bloated and twisted by tears and sympathy, slid out of his bunk as Miller fell asleep, and with friendly roughness forced the Parson to take his place.

It was nearly noon when the Parson, refreshed by sleep and the flapjacks and coffee prepared by the big Swede, harnessed his dogs and struck the trail toward Dawson. Miller was still heavily sleeping, but the Parson was happy in the consciousness that he left the man with his faith triumphant, and trust and submission to God's will restored.

But the tones of the frost harp beneath the Parson's feet as, holding the gee-pole, he ran behind the dogs, were low and subdued—a minor strain.

And again, in endless reiteration the words formed themselves to this accompaniment as he thought over the scenes of that terrible night,—chanting to the minor melody—"What good is it? What good is it? The futile gold! The futile gold!"



BOOK IV
BETTER THAN GOLD

XXIV

WALTER'S RETURN

"OH, Uncle Sandy, what *can* be keeping them?" Over and over, as the days of Walter's absence on his errand of mercy lengthened into weeks and the weeks into months, Viva asked the question. Hugging the old miner's arm in both of hers and swinging upon it like a child, the perplexing problem would be discussed with endless variety of conjecture. Old Sandy was so completely bound up in his Lassie that his heart felt every throb of hers.

"Now, don't worry, dearie," he would say, gathering the girl in his long arms and taking her upon his lap. "Walter has probably found that your father was better and had gone on to some farther point in this wilderness; or else your father's condition was such that it was unsafe to move him, and Walter is nursing him back to sufficient strength to warrant his bringing him across the mountains. I know that wilderness to the west, and it's hard and rugged, and the boy will take no rash chance; he has set out to bring your father to you and he is going to do it, and he's going to bring him in the best condition possible. Don't you worry."

But as the time lengthened far beyond his calculations the old man, although his words were brave and cheery, felt a growing anxiety equal to Viva's.

"It's mighty strange," he said to the Parson; "I am afraid of the worst. Walter and old Toozle are splendid mushers and their team is the best in the North; they ought to have been here long ago; I can't figure it out. I am afraid Lassie will never see her father alive."

To the girl the strain was growing unbearable. Valentine's Day, Lincoln's Birthday, Washington's Birthday, and then the end of February, and still no word. The implacable wilderness had swallowed up her two beloved ones.

For the girl now confessed to her own heart that there was something about this young man who was boring into the icy wilderness on his mission of love, that made him far more to her than a mere hunter-chum or big brother. The depth of his devotion compelled the awakening in her of a response that sometimes alarmed her. While she thought constantly with fond anxiety of her father, there was always entwined with that cord the golden thread of love for the young man who had so bravely and so quietly relinquished all his ambitions for wealth and gone on this perilous mission for her sake. She felt little anxiety for his physical health and well being; he was so strong, so capable; and had he not Toozle and the three St. Bernards with him? But she was longing for him, yearning to see him, to hear his voice and—yes, her heart promised a reception far warmer and more satisfactory to him than the parting.

And so March came and the mails, bringing letters from home and friends in Montana. She hardly read

them, so deeply absorbed was she in the fate of the absent two.

As her aunt grew stronger, and able, first, to sit on the fur-covered easy chair Uncle Sandy had fashioned for her, and then to move languidly about the house, with growing appetite and interest in everything, the longing of the girl to strike the trail in search of the missing ones grew stronger, until Uncle Sandy was put to his wit's ends to master her wild desire with his experience and calm common sense.

"You can accomplish nothing, Lassie," he would say. "We are hearing every week from Circle and Fort Yukon, and no word whatever has come to those places from the west. The trails are unbroken. At this season of the year there is no travel between the Koyakuk and the Upper Yukon. We would not know what trail to take and would only miss Walter and make the separation doubly long."

The Parson took her often on his trips to the Creeks, and the keen pleasure of flying along the trails, of visiting the miners in their cabins, of ministering to the sick and of keeping in close touch with the abundant life of the strenuous camp, kept the roses in her cheeks and strength in her body, and relieved, to some extent, the tension of her mind.

It was shortly after the second mail and the Parson's return from Miller's cabin, that he was aroused one morning, two hours before daylight. He struck a light and opened the door. The familiar deep barking and grumbling of the great dogs came gratefully to his ears, even before he saw Walter. The loaded sled, closely wrapped up in a tent and corded, stood outside.

Old Toozle and Walter, with cap and eyebrows and beard covered with bunches of frost, stepped into the cabin.

A glance at the sled had told the Parson everything. As he strongly grasped the young man's hand he said with deep sympathy, " So, that is all you can bring her? "

" Yes," was the answer, " and I am afraid to tell her. How is she—and her aunt? "

" Both well, but torn with anxiety, of course; and I want to tell you this, my boy, before you see her, that I believe the brave girl's longing is as great for you, or greater, than for her father."

The young man's face lighted up as from within. " I did all I could," he said. " I was a month finding him, and he was so desperately sick I couldn't start with him. I hoped from day to day there would be a change for the better. I sent Toozle to Nulato, two hundred and fifty miles away, for medicines and supplies. By the time he returned the man had passed away. I have messages for her. Will you break the news? We have been almost a month on the way from Koyakuk, for the roads were heavy and the box an awkward load. The feet of the dogs are in bad shape from the sharp ice; their moccasins are all worn out. The beaten trail from Circle was better, and we made better time the last few days."

" But yourself? " asked the Parson anxiously.

" Oh, I am all right and strong. Never felt physically better in my life; the mental strain of the past month, however, has been harder than I ever imagined anything could be."

To break the news! So often had this heavy duty been imposed upon the Parson of late! "Bring the box in here," he directed, "and drink some coffee. I'll go to Nestlenigh Cabin."

A knock upon the door of that cabin an hour before daylight was in itself startling and ominous. Mrs. Randall heard and recognized the rap instantly.

"It is the Parson," she called. Viva was wide-awake in a moment. Lighting a lamp, she flew to the door.

"Has Walter come? Did he bring"— Then catching sight of the Parson's face of compassion, and comprehending at once, she buried her face on his breast, moaning, "Oh, Daddy, Daddy!"

The minister led her back to bed and to Kitty's sympathizing arms, and turned to the older woman. "Your brother has marched forward," he said. "His body is here. After daylight we'll bring it into the other cabin."

Mrs. Randall could not speak, but her tears fell upon his hand as she clasped it convulsively in both of hers, and, broken up though he was with her grief, he thrilled from the touch of her lips upon his hand.

"Parson, dear," called Viva as he turned to go; and as he bent over her again she clasped her hands around his neck and drew his head down. "Tell him," she whispered, "that I thank him,—and—and" —he rather felt than heard the words now, the whisper was so low—"I love him."

Walter and old Toozle had breakfasted when the Parson returned to his cabin, the little Doctor awkwardly waiting upon them. They brought the long,

narrow box into the cabin. It was made of rough boards laboriously whipsawed by the young lawyer and the Indian, and fastened together, Indian fashion, with sinew. They removed the lid, which was lashed on with strips of buckskin.

The still form within seemed rather a sculptured statue of white marble than a body of flesh and bone. Walter had carefully shaved the beard and trimmed the hair and dressed the body neatly, although in the rough, woolen garments of the North. The kindly, steady winter had made it solid as stone. A clear-cut, manly, handsome face was this, of which Viva's was the scarcely more delicate counterpart.

They wiped the frost from the cold features and replaced the lid in the same cords, placed it on the sled, spoke to the dogs and, with Walter at the gee-pole and the others following, they moved slowly up the street. A silent, sympathetic crowd poured out from cabins, stores and lodging houses as they passed, for the story of the quest was generally known, and the return had been eagerly expected. "Viva's father," was whispered along the line.

"Say, Parson," hailed Big Bill Magee, coming out of his saloon and stretching a friendly hand to Walters, "I'll send three men to thaw the grave, if you'll show them where to dig. And let us know about the funeral."

Schofield and the Lieutenant ran out, as they passed the Post. "Great work, old man!" they said to Walter. "Sorry you couldn't save his life."

Long Sandy was up at his Eldorado cabin, and his smaller cabin was empty and cold. Here they halted

the dogs, which barked an eager announcement of their arrival. The men carried the box into the cabin and removed the lid. Silently the three from Nestlenigh Cabin came and greeted Walter—Mrs. Randall with a tearful kiss, Kitty with girlish embrace and streaming eyes; but Viva, dry-eyed and brave, pressed his hand in both of hers against her heart and murmured, "Thank you, dear Walter." Silently he put into her hand a pencil-written letter; silently the men went out and left the women with their dead.

In that time of no steam thawers it took at least two days and two nights to dig a grave. The cemetery was on a little foothill—a part of the great landslide which left its striking scar on the mountain below Dawson. The ground there was mingled rock, gravel, clay and muck—all frozen hard as granite. This must be thawed by fires of sticks and afterward laboriously picked and shoveled out.

Thither, the third day after Walter's return, wended the largest funeral procession Dawson had witnessed. From the Pioneer Hall it started after a short and cheerful service—for the man had been a man of faith and courage, and the service that consigned him to his long sleep must be like the man. From all the Creeks came the miners to honor the father of Viva and brother of Mrs. Randall. The Clan were there in force, even Miller coming from his far-away claim to find some solace for his own grief by showing sympathy with the grief of others. The College Quartet sang sweet songs of peace and consolation.

Father Justus was there and Mr. Bowman to take

part in the service. No crape was worn—there was no parade of grief. The coffin was the rude, nailless box of whipsawed boards fashioned by Walters and old Toozle on the far-away Koyakuk—for Viva would not have it changed.

The three ministers of the Gospel marched ahead, single file, on the narrow path through the snow; then the three great St. Bernards, driven by Chief Toozle and drawing the sled with the coffin, followed by six men of the Clan as pallbearers; then Long Sandy and Mrs. Randall, Walter and Viva, Tom Carter and little Kitty—then all the camp in long procession.

A prayer—a song—and the frozen body was lowered into the frozen ground, there to rest unchanged through the ages, unmarred by decay, unmarked by the tooth of time.

" Come in and have one on me," said Big Bill Magee to Lanky Bill, as, returning from the funeral together, they drew near to the former's saloon.

" No, I reckon not," answered Lanky. " Don't you know, I don't feel like drink after a thing like that. It makes me think of the old church on the hill in old Kentucky."

" There are a good many others of your mind. See them scattering off instead of coming here? "—and Big Bill pointed to the dispersing company. " And I'm blanked if I don't feel that way myself. A few more like that and I'll close out and go to honest mining. I wish I'd never left it."

" Parson, you and Walter and Uncle Sandy are the executors of my Father's will. Will you please come

to the cabin and hear it read?" Thus spoke Viva, and the three men went to Nestlenigh.

"I don't feel as if we had been to Brother's funeral at all," said Mrs. Randall as they went in. "It seems as though we had just paid him a little good-by visit."

"That's all it is, May," responded Sandy; "and a short good-by for some of us. I'd like to have shaken his hand once before he went over the hill."

"Walter drew up Father's will; let him read it," said Viva. And Walter read.

The will was very simple. The Carroll Estate, consisting of the ranch in Montana and a few other properties, was left to his daughter, with provision for the care of his sister; directions for the payment of certain obligations, and the appointing of three "who have been friends and helpers of my beloved daughter,"—naming Sandy, the Parson and Walter—as executors.

An unusual provision was added as the last: "I desire and direct that Alexander McCullough, who has so nobly befriended my daughter and sister and so freely shared his money and property with them, be considered henceforth *in loco parentis,* as head of my family and joint manager of my estate with my daughter, and to share with her in the enjoyment of its profits as she may direct."

There was also provision for Kitty's education and maintenance. To Walter he willed his guns and some claims in the Koyakuk.

"You are in for it, Sandy," said the Parson with a smile. "That puts you right under Viva's willful little thumb, and we other trustees will see that you don't squirm out."

"I am afraid the lawyer who wrote the will and the daughter in her letter were guilty of 'exerting undue influence,'" returned Sandy. "But the will doesn't change things much. I would never separate from my Family anyhow—unless they should fire me;" and he slipped his hand over Viva's shoulder, to be fondled and rubbed against her cheek.

Then Walter had to tell his story in detail—how on New Year's Day he found Mr. Carroll in the cabin of his partner, who was a runaway Norwegian sailor from a whaling vessel—how the dull disease had made such progress that all the faculties were benumbed and even Viva's letter hardly stirred him to memory or interest—how Walter tried daily to rouse him but without success—how three days before the end he heard him calling in the night and, going to his bedside, looked into clear, intelligent eyes and heard another voice than the thick and heavy one he was accustomed to—how Mr. Carroll plied Walter with a hundred keen questions, made his will, and, laboriously, with a hand that would hardly move at his bidding, had written a letter to his daughter—how he talked incessantly with intelligence and even with humor, and went into eternity with the eyes of his mind open, with faith in God unwavering; and without a tremor—even with eagerness—launched upon "the Great Adventure."

Although the eyes of the women were streaming with tears when Walter finished and those of the men hardly less moist, all echoed Mrs. Randall, when she softly said, "I wouldn't have anything about all this different from what it is."

After a little, Viva jumped up in her own brisk way. "Now I want all you people to sit right here for awhile. Walter and I are going to Snug—I mean we are going to the little cabin. I have something to show him," and, followed by smiles from the older ones and a genuine giggle from Kitty, the two went out.

The young lawyer's heart was in a tumult. He was more perplexed than ever. He hardly dared to credit his senses, which told him he was alone with his love and by her planning. The Parson had given him her whispered message; but the words might mean no more than they did three months ago. Then she had said, "I love you," but he knew that the words were meaningless to her, as the love of the one man for the one woman is understood by those who have received and felt this supreme blessing. The whole fabric of his being shook with the stress of his doubt and his longing.

Viva spoke with her accustomed directness. "Dear Walter," she said, "I have two things to give you. The first is this"—and she put into his hand her father's letter.

The characters were sprawled and dim and irregular. The blackened, swollen arm had been but a sluggish and unwilling servant to the will. Walter read with growing hope and wonder.

DEAR LITTLE CHUMMIE:

I am standing "on the brink," and I am not afraid. If I can make my hand move I will write a short letter—I do not wish to dictate it. I have just read your letter—I could not read it before. And Walter

Walters has just made me understand where you are and all about your search for me. I could not comprehend it before. The mists that have lain on my mind like fogs on a meadow have been dispelled and I see clearly for the first time in two years.

Walter has told me of your search for Daddy and its adventures. It is all exactly like my brave Chummie. God bless you, bless you! And God bless May —too good a sister for such a brother. And Long Sandy—I heard of him at Forty Mile and Circle—a masterpiece of this big land which makes big men. I am thankful that you have such a father to take my place.

And Kitty and Tom—to save two such lives and give me such a pair of children; Chummie, that was great!

My hand is failing—I can't write of the Parson, bless him! and the Clan. Only Walter. He has told me of his love for you, and how you answered.

Dear child, if the big love—as your Mother loved me and I her—comes to you, I pray God it may be this young man. You'll never know all he has done for me. Follow your heart—I think it will lead you to him. If you look upon my dead face I think you'll find this, my dearest wish, in it.

Good-night, Chummie. I hear your Mother calling, and she is close by. DADDY.

Walter was trembling as he closed the letter and gave it back to her. He dared not raise his eyes.

"And the other thing you have to give me, Viva?"

"It is this, Walter."

Very softly, very slowly her hands stole up his shoulders and around his neck; very softly—very slowly, as his responsive arms went around her, she drew his head down to hers, and their lips met in a

kiss that was for them the consummation of all things, the dissolving of all doubt, the revelation of all mystery, the unfolding to one another of their very souls.

"Dear Walter," she said after an eternal moment, "the big love has come to me. It has been with me for weeks. It unfolded slowly like an opening rose. It grew and grew, until, before you returned I knew that nobody and nothing in all the world mattered except you and your love. We'll make a home in this big land together."

And so they talked, with blissful silences between, and any one peeping into the little cabin would have pronounced it well named. When they went back to Nestlenigh Cabin for the kisses and blessings of the rest, their arms were still around each other and the "light that never was on sea or land" was in their eyes.

XXV

FATHER JUSTUS

ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL was a mushroom-growth that shot up in the night of the Klondike's dire necessity. With that first horde of gold seekers that " banged at the Chilcoot " in '97 and swarmed down the Yukon, stalked the twin specters that always haunt every great, new camp—gaunt Typhoid and mad Pneumonia. After them, into the settled winter camp, hobbled the scourge of the North, black Scurvy. The army was homeless, houseless. Prospecting must be done and claims secured on promising creeks before others staked them. What time to waste on house building? Hence the hastily constructed twelve-by-fourteen log cabin, moss-chinked, mud-roofed, floorless, dark. From two to six men in every cabin, with their winter's outfit; what space to care for a sick man, and how could he get well on a diet of bacon and beans?

Father Justus came among the first and instantly rose to the emergency, as an eagle up a mountain wall. A hasty canvass up the creeks and in the saloons and stores of the town; year tickets given for three ounces of gold; then carpenters at two dollars an hour, and a force of volunteer ax-men working for the comfort of sick friends; and lo! a log hospital designed



ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL WAS A MUSHROOM GROWTH THAT SHOT UP IN THE NIGHT OF THE KLONDIKE'S DIRE NECESSITY

for twenty-five patients, but crowded with fifty the first month. An additional wing, and then another, as the forty-below weather cooled the ardor of the prospector and enforced leisure for deeds of altruism. No Sisters of Mercy, no time to send for them; the nursing must be done by whiskered men—stranded doctors, some of them—working in the hospital for a winter's grub-stake. And everywhere, collecting, marketing, supervising, nursing,—everywhere at once—patient, tireless, sleepless, was the white-haired priest. All of his patients, and indeed the whole camp loved him.

Between Father Justus and the Parson sprung up from their first meeting a growing friendship. They were very unlike in appearance, education, belief, tastes—everything, except bigness of heart and desire to help and to bless. One was a Jesuit of the Jesuits, born in Ireland; the other of Scotch Presbyterian stock, but broadened and sweetened by breathing the air and absorbing the thought and character of the Great West. Both were well versed in their respective tenets and believed them thoroughly. Many a night over the chess-board or by the bedside of an unconscious patient they had threshed over the musty, medieval straw of religious controversy, without other effect than to give each a growing respect for the other, and to amuse the patients listening through the many-cracked board partitions. Always there would be, on the part of the priest, the crisp, eager, incisive sentences, plentifully besprinkled with Latin quotations uttered in a voice growing ever higher in pitch—sentences that thrust and flashed like a rapier; and from the Parson

the good-natured, easy, half-mocking parry in even, drawling tones, with a humor that often brought a burst of laughter and applause from the Protestant convalescents on the other side of the partition.

The Parson was at the hospital almost every day, and with him came often Mrs. Randall, carrying some delicacy for the patients prepared by her own hands. During her long illness no more fervent prayers for her recovery ascended to heaven than from Father Justus and St. Mary's Hospital. And when she was able to resume her visits she was welcomed as one risen from the dead.

Early one April morning the Parson entered the hospital. "Well, well! You are a wonder, Father Justus!" he exclaimed as he warmly clasped the extended hand of the white-haired priest. "Thirty-five miles yesterday along Hunker and Gold Stream collecting for the hospital, up with poor Quigley all night; and here, at eight o'clock in the morning, you look as fresh as a rose. What do you take?"

"The same liquor as you, sir; and it seems to have a still more surprising effect upon you. When I got to the mouth of the Bonanza coming home last evening I heard that you had passed early yesterday, hiking away to Upper Bonanza. Forty miles! You must have been out all night."

"Yes, the slushy snow made hard mushing in the afternoon and I waited in Lanky Bill's cabin for the night to stiffen the trail a bit. But what a glorious mush it was! The hard crust on the snow made the trail superfluous. The keen frost sparkled like diamonds on the bushes. The little fairies of the snow

were under my feet tinkling their musical bells. I struck across the hill from Big Skukum following the ridge. First, the moon and stars, then the miracle of the Aurora. Fold on fold of diaphanous curtain this time with all the electric lights turned on from the highest gallery of heaven. Some sky-filling goddess was doing a butterfly skirt-dance. It was Iris, I think, for the colors were so wonderful—all of them there at once shading into each other, flashing and changing every moment, a riot of hilarious figures. I found myself shouting aloud and applauding, as at a great show."

"Tut, tut! with your heathen goddesses!" chided the priest.

"Well, Father, heaven was very close to me last night. I felt as if on wings. Walking and running were no exertion at all, and the twenty miles slipped behind me like magic. The glory of it made a cheerful sermon in my brain which I shall try to preach next Sunday."

"And do you know what I was doing in the intervals of attending to Quigley?" replied the priest. "I had out my chess-board and was analyzing the situation at that twentieth move of our last game, when you sacrificed your bishop. You won, but I think I have solved the problem and can beat the move. You know you are a little too ready to kill off the clergy."

"Ah! Father," laughed the Parson, "it needed just that human touch to make you perfect! The Saint of Dawson sitting up with a dying man and studying a situation in chess! Well, I'll come to-

morrow night and demonstrate the soundness of my sacrifice."

"Come with me to the addition now," said Father Justus; "we have a new case—a bad one, just in by dog-sled from Fort Selkirk. He belongs to you."

The Parson followed the priest along the narrow hall, but his progress was slow. From the open doors of the convalescent wards came subdued shouts of welcome:

"Hello, Doctor! Have a seat in my morris chair, just imported from England"—surrendering a curious contrivance of soap box and spruce "knees."

"Good morning, Dominie! See how I can walk to-day. The color is fading in my legs. I'm thinking of dancing at The Northern to-night"—this from a scurvy-tainted college boy.

"Say, Reverend, when will you write another letter for me? I've got a dollar saved to send one out to the Old Woman before the "break up."

"Parson, the newspaper clippings were great. Your daughter is the most popular girl in the world with the boys in this camp, for sending them. You don't think the cussed Spanish dagos will be fool enough to jump Uncle Sam, do you? Jimminy! Wish I was back in Ohio with my old company."

Farther on he steps quickly into a little room in response to the pitiful appeal in a pair of gray eyes. The tears start to his own as he sees the streams which course down the thin cheeks of the boy on the cot. A feeble pressure from the hand he clasps in both of his; an effort to talk which ends in the words "Mother, Nelly"; then the mute appeal in the eyes again.

"Well, Tommy, better to-day, aren't you? I'll come in before I go and help you to write a cheery letter to them." For the boy is one of the Parson's special pets and has lain there nearly all winter, dying by inches.

"No hope," says the priest as they pass on. "That delicately reared city boy is dying of nothing but sheer homesickness."

They go out of a door into the April sunshine, and passing up a flight of stairs walk along a corridor built on the outside of the second log house. Here they look down upon the mighty Yukon and listen to its murmur, as the Giant of the North dreams beneath his coverlet of ice; and upward to the great, dustpan-shaped cavity in the mountain, whence, fifty years before, had descended that landslide which buried the Tuksuk Indian village fathoms deep and converted the flat into a foothill. Down the river juts out the famous sheer cliff of the Bend. Although the eaves are dripping the snow blanket still covers river and mountain. The two ministers of the Gospel pause by a common impulse to feast their eyes for a moment on this, one of the most beautiful landscapes of the North; then with a sigh of reverence they enter the third and newest building.

Here they found the late arrival. He lay on a bed by the window looking like Lazarus "bound hand and foot with graveclothes"; a stubble-bearded, dark man of medium size.

By his head sat one of the toughest looking specimens of humanity the Parson's eyes had ever seen. A dirty, bed-ticking parky, blue overalls and brown muk-

luks formed his dress. The head was striking because of its very uncouthness. A mass of black hair, uncombed and tousled, showing a little gray in places, whether from dirt or white hairs the Parson could not determine, crowned a skull full of knobs and bumps. The forehead is best described by the term gnarled, though broad and with plenty of room for brains behind it. Coal-black eyes, watchful and suspicious, gazed steadily at the intruder. The nose was very high and thin, an exaggerated Roman. His face was covered with a thick black beard that climbed almost to his eyes. His ears were set straight out from his head, and, with all his face that was visible and his hands, were grimy and uncared for. The only redeeming feature was his mouth, which, so far as it could be seen through the thick whiskers and mustache, was well shaped, and its expression both serious and kindly. One would expect pleasant words from such a mouth.

The man was very tall and lean and his legs and arms very long, and from his hands the sleeves of his parky and shirt retreated far, as if in dismay at their knotted blackness. But although so unprepossessing there was something about the man, an element of strength and character that was instantly recognized by the Parson, always quick to discern a *man,* that drew him irresistibly.

"This is Mr. Martin," said the priest, indicating the man on the bed; "he has been asking for you."

Instantly the Parson's large hand was extended to give that warm grip the miners knew so well; but Martin shook his head with a twisted smile.

"You'll have to excuse me, Parson; I'm not shakin'

these days. But my heart has been shakin' hands with you ever since I heard you were here. That was what hurried me down the river; somehow I felt that I'd be all right when I got with you. I've never forgot what you did for me on the White Pass trail last fall, and your 'Good-by and God bless you' when you left me."

The preacher had been scanning keenly the be-whiskered face on the pillow, and now his eyes lighted with a smile of recognition.

"I've got you now. You were smooth-shaven then. You are my friend of the all-soda flapjacks."

Martin snickered. "They were bum, sure. I can make 'em better now."

"But why is this?" asked the Parson, as he took the soap box the priest shoved toward him ere he departed on his round of duties. "You're guyed up like a loaded Yukon sled."

"Tree," said Martin.

"Where are you hurt?"

Again the whimsical smile: "Where *ain't* I hurt? I reckon if you find a bone anywhere in my skeleton that ain't busted you'll have to put it there first. Jim, here, set a few dozen of 'em; and when he got me to Selkirk the Mounted Police doctor hurt me all over again and triced me up like this. He said Jim ought to've been a surgeon; he's a darn sight better than most of the young sawbones that come out here to mangle the mangled."

A grunt of disapproval from the figure at the head of the bed drew the Parson's attention.

"This is your friend, is it? What is his other

name?" Instinctively the Parson refrained from offering his hand. The time had not yet come for that.

Martin laughed. "Well, now, durned if I know; and we've been pardners nigh on to seven months. Just Jim; 'Cussin' Jim' some of the fellers call him because of his gifts in that line. Maybe you think you've heard some blasphemin' on the trail; and White Pass and Chilcoot trails sure were enough to make the Angel Gabriel cut loose and forget his bringin' up; but I tell you, you don't know the fust principles of cussin', the real fine touches, till you hear Jim beefin'."

"Shut up, you blank-blankety-blank!" came in rough tones from the strange figure at the head of the bed; but the Parson noticed that the mouth was pleasant.

The eyes of the minister had been glancing about the little room, and his hands were quick to follow. An easing of the blankets here, a touch of the pillow there, the patient deftly lifted and turned an inch, fresh water brought and given—it didn't take two minutes, but the sufferer sighed relief.

"I knew I'd feel better as soon as you come."

"Now, you're full of a good story, and I'm full of desire to hear it. Go ahead as long as you are able;" and the Parson shoved his box to the wall to ease his back, and so that his eyes could watch both the broken figure on the cot and the dark one at its head.

"Oh, I'm able all right. Jim says it's a pity that tree didn't bust my jaw while it was doin' the rest of me. It's a long yarn, and it's mostly about Jim. Parson," and the gray eyes suddenly brimmed, "this

pardner of mine is the greatest man God Almighty ever made!"

The lank figure at the head shot up as if from the touch of a spring. "Hell!" he said, "Mart, if ye're going to open yer —— gate, I'll get out of the way of the sluicehead;" and he jerked himself through the door.

Martin winked one eye and joined the Parson's laugh.

"That's Jim!" he said. "He let me off easy on your account. If you'd been anybody else, an' I'd made that break, the air in this room would of smelt of brimstone for a week."

XXVI

CUSSIN' JIM

"WELL, Parson, I've got a hard-luck story to tell you, and the only streak of pay in it is Jim. Along about the first of September, wasn't it, when I saw you on Dead Horse Trail? Lordy! what a pickle I was in when you found me! One cayuse wedged in the rocks thirty feet below the trail with his hoofs in the air, and t'other chargin' around on the narrow path, tryin' to back himself off; the packers back along the line cussin' me for blockadin' the trail. I'll never know how you turned the trick, for it didn't seem more than ten minutes after you left me in the little niche you'd found, holdin' the pony agin the cliff, till up the trail you came with the procession, leading the hoss I thought was a goner, and him none the wuss for his fall except a few patches of bark off his laigs. And the busted sacks all darned up, neat as Granmother's stockin'! If I had your knack with hosses, Parson, d'ye think I'd waste my time preachin'! How'd ye do it?"

"Never mind," said the Parson; "go on with your story."

"Well, that night the devil of hard luck was proddin' me good and strong. I'd got my two crow-baits and their packs to the camp by the little lake where I'd been bringin' up my stuff for five days. 'Twas

about four mile from our noon camp where you didn't eat my flapjacks. I'd started from White's Camp with four bronchos and only them two was left. It was snowin' and rainin' together, and the wind whirlin' in gusts from the Summit. I was plumb beat out. When I got to my eight-by-ten where I'd been a stowin' my grub I found it torn down and split right across, and two big fellers puttin' up their tent on my location. My stuff was scattered 'round, some of the flour sacks torn an' all my grub gettin' wet; and one of the fellers had bust open a case of my Eagle Brand, and was feedin' his Klondike stove with the boards and puttin' the milk in his coffee.

" You bet I was wild; but while I was—expostulatin' with the feller that was puttin' up the tent the bandit by the stove got the drop on me, and there I was! I knew there wasn't another patch of campin' ground a foot square within a mile that wasn't occupied. While I was debatin' with myself whether to hit the trail agin in the dark, or to take the chance of gettin' the big feller before the chap with the gun finished me, I saw the gun that had been pintin' my way drop, and the hand that'd held it reachin' for the firmament. Then I heard a gatling volley of cuss-words, most of 'em new and all of 'em what you'd call masterpieces; and there was Jim, standin' by his tent, a shooter in each hand, utterin' 'em. Why, I could actually *see* the eppythets impingin' like bullets agin the hides of the two pirates who were both standin' still in an attitude of heavenly longin'. I can't recollect all the words, but if you want me to real bad I can mebby call up a few of the most artistic ones."

"Cut them out," said the Parson, shortly; "tell me what you *did.*"

"Well," grinned Martin, "we didn't do a thing to them two galoots. I gathered their weapons and faced 'em to the down trail, kindly helpin' a little with my boot; and the last of 'em I seen they were hikin' toward Dawson as if a million in nuggets was waitin' 'em. They didn't even wait to take my busted tent that I offered for their new ten-by-twelve. 'Twasn't so much Jim's guns that hurried 'em off, 'twas his languige.

"That was my beginnin' with Jim. We never popped the question to one another; we just married—that's all. We relayed our goods together from camp to camp, usin' our two tents for storehouses, packin' on my two cayuses and Jim's mule, and our backs. When we got to Lake Bennett only the mule was left, and we traded him for a sack o' flour.

"We were late. My last cayuse smashed my whipsaw when he fell down the cliff, and Jim's was stole. We couldn't buy one for its weight in dust. Good timber was gettin' scarce; everybody crazy makin' boats. You know that crowd, Parson; plumb bughouse, every one of them. Everybody scramblin' to get ahead of everybody else, and the devil take the hindmost. Bennett was hell—jest plain hell. The only milk of human kindness I tasted on that whole trail, Parson, was from your tin cup—and Jim's.

"At last, one mornin', far down the west side of Lake Bennett we found a dead man lyin' on a whipsaw. He was in a little patch of good timber, hard to get at. A light skift of snow covered him, and when

we turned him over we saw the bullet hole. We asked no questions; jest buried him and took his saw. That was the law of the trail, you know. But Jim didn't swear once at that camp.

" He was the captain in everything. The blue-grass colonel that grub-staked me when I was a Louisville drayman did it because I was a handy man; but I wasn't a patchin' to an old sourdough, sage-brush prospector like Jim. I believe he could make a steel rock-drill out of crumbly ore, or a woolen mackinaw from mountain goat's hair. When we got our boat made it was one of the best on the Yukon—and the latest startin'.

" We couldn't get more'n half our grub on board, so we left it in the pirates' tent at Bennett along with the thousand tons of other stuff the nutty Klondikers couldn't take. The snow and wind didn't let up on us through Tagish and Marsh. We run the Whitehorse Rapids in a snow squall so thick I couldn't see Jim at the steerin' oar. Through Lake Lebarge Jim broke the ice ahead with an ax while I pulled; my ferryin' on the Ohio had give me strong arms and the knack. The water was so low in the Thirty Mile that its rock teeth grinned at us pretty fierce, and the ice in the whirlpool eddies scored our boat deep. The ice cakes came thick out of the Hootalink and stayed with us all the way down, sometimes jammin' us on bars. Then we'd have to pack our stuff to solid ice, skid our boat on the sweeps to open water, and load up again. All along we were passin' camps with fellers hollerin' to us to tie up. But you know all about that, Parson; you came pretty late yourself.

"We got to Fort Selkirk the middle of November on the last of the runnin' water; and there was darned little water to be seen—jest grindin' ice cakes. We had a devil of a time landin'. The ice carried us past the Fort a mile, packed around us tight and piled on top of us. We'd hard work to keep from goin' under, when the big slabs would turn summersets. Once a thunderin' piece smashed through the gunnel and came near takin' my laigs. It froze solid, afterwhile, but awful rough. We were in the back water from the Pelly and half a mile from the bank. We had to stay in the boat two days before we durst try for shore. Lived on hard-tack and kept warm tryin' to keep our grub from freezin' solid in the boat. Then the Selkirk Indians came out to us, shovin' long sleds before 'em, and helped us land our load.

"You'd of thought we'd had enough experience to last us all winter; but not Jim. Darned if I don't think hard luck's a sort o' necessity with him. It kind of jars loose his safety-valve and lets out the cussin'. If everything run smooth, with all them swear-words abilin' inside of him and nothin' to call 'em out, he'd sure bust.

"As soon as we got our tent set up on the high bank below the Fort and our grub in it he began lookin' across the Yukon toward the Pelly Palisades. Then he fell to work like all possessed, makin' a sled and two pair of snow-shoes. He made them in no time and they was dandies. He got sinew and moose-leather from the Siwashes an' the right timber from the woods. I helped some, whittlin' the sticks he give me and takin' a cussin' when I spoiled 'em. I didn't

mind the cussin'. I rather liked it. I actually got to feel somethin' was lackin' out of the day when he didn't open up on me.

"We traded grub and tobacco for moccasins and muskrat parkies. It took us about a month to git ready, and at last we loaded our sled and went on the big mush. There's an Indian trail up the Palisades on the west side of the Pelly, and for forty mile or so it wasn't so bad. Then the McMillan Mountains shut down on us, and 'twas hell agin—hell friz up! Smashin' through alders, cuttin' logs, rail-fencin' up rocks, shinnin' along little shelves of ice by the side of the rapids, Jim ahold of the gee-pole in front and me of the haw-pole behind. When we come to the forks Jim chose the McMillan because it looked the meanest; said he didn't like the idea of back-trackin' east so much up the Pelly.

"There's no need of tellin' an old musher like you about that trip. We were aimin' to strike new prospectin' ground, and I reckon we did, all right. There wasn't any others of the Klondike stampeders with the fool nerve to take that route.

"Jim shot a cow moose before we left the Pelly, and we took what we could carry and cached the rest. When we got beyond the high mountains the goin' was better. The ice on the McMillan was smoother there and we made faster time. But cold! Parson, they say you've been hittin' the trail all winter up Hunker and Bonanza and Dominion, an' that sixty below jest makes ye feel good and happy; but I reckon the McMillan Flats would of made you long fer happy home this winter. Still! Not a breath of air!

The only sounds we heard was the frost-banjo pickin' high strings under our feet, the ice-guns bangin' up the river, and the spruce trees explodin'. And that black death-mist, have you breathed it?—cuttin' your lungs like ground glass! The cold, heavy and sullen, squeezin' the blood from your nose or your cheek in a wink, hittin' yer forred like a club and stunnin' you, sendin' your breath cracklin' past your ears like paper shakin', makin' your moose-meat fly in dry dust a rod when you hit it with the ax!

" But it didn't faze Jim. I reckon his only trouble was he couldn't cuss on the trail, with two pounds of ice shuttin' his mouth; but 'twas just gatherin' a good sluicehead, and gushed out all right when the campfire thawed his whiskers.

" I reckon we were about a hundred and fifty miles from the Yukon when we come to a nice patch of spruce on a high bank, with two good-lookin' creeks close by.

" ' Better build our cabin here an' prospect,' says Jim; an' we begun.

" 'Twas the second day there and I was choppin' down a big spruce, thawin' my ax every few minutes so's not to bust it. The snow was deep an' fine and loose in the woods—dry, like granulated sugar—you know the kind; won't pack; gives under your feet and swamps you when you're in a hurry. I'd cleared a path to run away from where I thought 'twas goin' to fall, but a leanin' saplin' skidded it round right on top of me, a log hid in the deep snow throwed me down, and the first thing I knowed I didn't know nothin'.

"Jim never would tell me how long it was before I come to, or how he got me into the tent. I reckon it must of been a day or two before I woke up, dazed and numb, the pains wakin' too, one by one, and stabbin' me here and there. I tried to move my arms an' legs, but there was nothin' doin'. They just wouldn't budge. But the pain! I tell you it was Johnny-on-the-spot all the time; and the spot was all of me. I was just one big cramp, twitchin' and tearin' apart.

"I could turn my head a little, and I saw Jim sittin' on the camp-kit, stuffin' wood into the Klondike stove. I tried to say somethin', but only a groan came out. Then Jim got up and come to me, and we looked at one another a long time, never sayin' a word. Somehow Jim looked different—kind of old and thin. His face was dirtier than ever, but I saw two clean streaks down each side of his nose. I've never told him of it; I reckon he'd just about die of shame if he knew that I knowed he'd been cryin'.

"One by one I come to know the things Jim had done for me. He'd took his caribou sleepin'-bag and turned it inside out to make a soft bed for me to lie on. He'd tore his spare shirt and drawers in strips and tied me up with 'em. You see, the limbs of that tree just naturally hit me all over; smashed both arms and legs, stove in my chest, laid my head open, and jabbed into me here and there with the sharp, brittle splinters. The frost was so keen that the branches had no give to them, but were brash as glass. There were lots of gashes to be tied up and ragged wounds to be laid together and bandaged. He'd took off my bloody clothes, washed me and put on my clean shirt

and drawers, slittin' 'em when he had to. He'd emptied a flour sack into the camp kit to get the cloth, had made splints out of a box, had unraveled a thick pair of stockings for the yarn, and had wound me all up neat and scientific. Then he'd split my sleepin' bag and tucked the warm fur around me.

"'Jim,' I said. 'What did you do it for? You know darned well I'm all in. You can't keep the breath in me more'n a day or two, and it's hell-fire every minute. There's a rib-end sawin' into my lung close to my heart right now, and I taste blood. You can't keep me alive, so what's the use? Take your gun and let me have it in the head right now. 'Twill be the act of a friend, and Christ'll thank you for it. Do it quick.'"

"What did he say?" asked the Parson, as Martin paused.

"Now, Parson, I'm not goin' to tell you. If I'd begin you'd stop me before I got started."

"Leave out the profanity and tell me the rest."

"There ain't any 'rest,'" said Martin. "You take the swear-words out of Jim's mouth and he's dumb as an oyster. He jest went for me. He called me all the names he could think of; an' what Jim can't think of in the way of bad names don't count. 'Pusillanimous varmint' was the mildest.

"'You've *got* to live, *damn you,*' he said; 'and if you up and die on me, I'll kill you!'

"Well, Parson, though it hurt like blazes, I had to laugh then; and I believe that was the turnin' point. Jim's cussin' kind of heartened me up, like a halleluyah at camp-meetin'.

"But that night the pain was awful, and the next mornin' I was flighty like—sort of comin' and goin'. I went clean off once, and when I come to there I was in the sled. Jim was ropin' me in, and the tent was wrapped around me, an' the sleepin'-bags. I was mighty weak, but I was strong enough to do some cussin' myself then; an' I think the Recordin' Angel will let me off some easy, considerin'.

"'Jim,' I said, 'you're a fool! You can't make it two mile. It took the two of us more'n three weeks to bring that sled here with jest a little grub in it. There'll be two of us found in the ice in the spring, that's all. Take the sleepin' bags and hike. Freezin's easy, they say, a darned sight easier than this fire in my bones. Take the grub and my word to my folks, an' go.'

"If you'll believe me, Parson, Cussin' Jim didn't say a word. Just came and looked at me awhile, and then covered my face gentle with the caribou robe, and I could feel the sled heavin' and movin'.

"Somehow, lookin' back at the days and weeks that follered, I can't make 'em real. The thing *couldn't be done,* and I can't make it come any other way.

"Whole days are clean gone from me, when the fever rose. I must of babbled wild, from the words and names Jim has let slip—names I never spoke when I was at myself. When I'd come to, there would be that slow heavin' and glidin' of the sled under me, or else it would be standin' still while Jim was ahead kickin' the snow for a trail or knockin' the corners off the ice with the ax where the cakes had piled edgewise. 'Twas always heavy pullin', the sled pilin' up

that gritty, sand-like, dry snow in front of it, instead of slippin' over it. Then there'd be ice-slabs at all angles, high, with sharp corners and edges, for all the world like the sharp rocks of White Pass that broke the legs of a thousand horses. Jim would have to pound down the sharp corners and tug and work the sled over 'em, with always the fear of upsettin' the sled and killin' me.

" When we come to the rapids and rocks I'd hear the water roarin' and rushin' alongside an' under me, an' I'd hope the thin, narrow, sidelin' shelves of spray-ice would give way and the river would end it all; only then would come the fear that Jim would go too, for I knew he'd never let go of that rope an' gee-pole.

" 'Twas miracle piled on miracle that he got me through. He must of worked mighty careful. Sometimes he'd tie one end of the long rope to a tree or rock, pass it through the side of the sled aft and fore, carry ahead, pull it taut and tie the other end to somethin'; then slide the sled along the rope and do it again. Sometimes he'd have to leave the river ice and cut a path up over the rocks and hills through the alders and birch, work me up and let me down with the rope on the lower side. Some days he couldn't of made more'n a mile.

" He always got started from camp before daylight and worked without stoppin' till a little before dark. Then he'd pitch the tent, gather a thick bed of spruce-tips, lift the false bottom he'd made to the sled with me on it, and lay me gentle on the bed. Then he'd put up the stove and warm the tent, and feed me tea and hard-tack soaked in hot milk. After that he'd

tend me as careful as a Sister in a hospital, loosenin' the bandages where I was gettin' numb and tightenin' the loose splints. He put somethin' on the gashes —moose tallow and spruce gum, I reckon; anyhow it healed 'em wonderful."

"How did he sleep at night," asked the Parson, "without any blankets?"

"Sleep? He *never* slep' except mebby in little snatches. Whatever time o' night I'd look, there would set Jim in front of the stove, chuckin' in wood. When I'd speak about it, he'd lie, sayin' he'd just woke up.

"After while I begun to suspicion Jim was starvin' himself for me. You see there wasn't much room in the sled, with me and the sleepin' bags and tent and stove; and Jim wanted to save weight. So he took what he thought I'd need, and mighty little else. He even left the rifles, but brought his six-shooter.

"He got gaunter and skinnier than ever. When I'd ask him about his eatin' he'd lie, easy and cheerful. He once stewed a little pinesquir'l he'd shot, and brought it to me. When I kicked about eatin' it all, he said gruffly that he'd shot rabbits while I was loony and ate 'em up. He stopped takin' milk in his tea; said it made him sick. He'd make sounds of eatin' where I couldn't see; but 'twasn't natural, and he didn't fool me.

"Oh, Parson, those long, weary, unreal days and longer nights! The trees slowly, slowly wheelin' into sight above me, noddin' out at me when the sled tipped toward 'em, and drawin' back quick when it slanted t'other way. Half crazy as I was, my senses always

fadin' away and comin' to again, the trees seemed all the time to be meltin' into the figures of my old schoolmates playin' hide-and-seek with me. One boy I used to fight with the most—my partic'lar chum—kept jumpin' at me out o' the woods, and then explodin' into branches an' twigs.

"And in the mornin' before daylight the stars and the Northern Lights! I had Jim prop my head in the back of the sleigh so I could see him through the foot or so of fur he piled up around my face; an' when the sled was slidin' down an ice-hummock I'd watch the back of his head and his shoulders, with the taut rope across them—then he would disappear as the sled struck the upward slope of another hummock and I'd stare up at the winkin' stars. The McMillan is the crookedest river on earth, I think, and we were headed toward all points of the compass most every half mile. I'd watch for the Big Dipper and the North Star. I couldn't shake my fist at the old fraud, but he got my opinion of him in strong words whenever he come blinkin' through the tree tops, for lurin' us into his cruel kingdom.

"There was a mighty battle in the North Lights sometimes between real angels and real devils. The struggle would grow fast and furious—the devils of blackness massin' in solid columns and chargin' up the heavens, breakin' up into flyin' squads, wrestlin', striken' and fightin'. Sometimes the devils and angels would be all mixed up in a big free-for-all. Somehow it seemed to be a great fight for me—for my soul—and I'd get so excited that I'd holler out an' cheer the angels on. Jim thought I was delirious, an' mebby

I was—but I was prayin' some genuine prayers all the same; and the fact that the big battle in the heavens always ended in a victory for the angels heartened me mightily.

"I slept more in the sled than I did at night in the tent, for the pains were stabbin' me all night, and the fever would rise and burn me alive. If I could of made it easier for Jim I wouldn't have worried so much, but the thought that I was drivin' him to his death was always with me. I learned to pray on that trip, Parson; and the good Lord knows my prayers were all for Jim.

"Breakin' through the McMillan Range just before the river joins the Pelly was awful work; and several times I thought we was goners, and I reckon Jim did too, but he didn't give up. The ice, shelved high on the rocks above the rapids, would boom hollow, like a drum, as we'd slide over it, Jim keepin' the sled guyed tight to the rocks and trees at the side. He sure fought an awful fight for me on that river, with the odds all agin him, but he brought me through.

"When we struck the Pelly Jim seemed to take new life. We were only about sixty miles from Selkirk, with somethin' of a trail made by Indian trappers and mebby some prospectors goin' up the Pelly. It was only two or three miles to where we had cached the moose meat, and Jim made a bee-line for the spot. Jim talked all the time that morning while he was fixin' me up in the sled about the good square meal that was awaitin' him and me. And I begun to take heart for the first time, and to think that we were goin' to make it after all.

"Sudden the sled stopped, and I knew somethin' was wrong. Jim was still a long time—and then he let loose. He hadn't cussed once since he started haulin' me to Selkirk; but he sure made up for lost time now. Some dirty thief had robbed our cache—Dago *cheechako,* most likely—no Injun would 'a' been mean enough. He'd took every darned smitch of grub. Left nothin' but one ham bone, and the camp robbers had picked that clean.

"I'd got used to Jim's swearin' and didn't mind it; but here it was different and fairly gave me the creeps—it was so deep, and bitter and awful. Parson, do you know I believe them cusses flew straight to that thief like hawks, and found him wherever he was, and tore him. I'd rather of been in our shoes than his. I'll bet he never slept that night, but suffered torments.

"But Jim's cussin' helped us both. It relieved Jim's dammed-up feelin's, and it showed me that Jim wasn't all in. When he got through cussin' he built a fire and roasted the ham bone of the moose, and we had a good meal together right out in the open.

"Well, I must of gone clean daffy after that. It seems like a dim dream of floatin' in cold clouds, with now and then a jolt on the earth. Jim was makin' a desperate dash for Selkirk along the dim trail. When the mists would clear a little from my brain I'd catch glimpses of him staggerin' along with the rope across the back of his neck, his shoulders hitchin' determined, as if he was proddin' himself along.

"How long it was I don't know—I was past keepin' count o' the days. But I'm certain that for a night

or two before we got to Selkirk Jim didn't stop at all. I remember the moon's face grinnin' at me, the stars dancin' and winkin' sarcastic, and the Northern Lights, when the trail turned to the right, flamin' like fiery swords. And the snow, crunchin' under Jim's feet, fell into a kind of tune—' I'll make it, I'll make it, I'll make it.'

" I can't remember a thing about gettin' to Selkirk. The doctor told me about it a week after. He said that one of the Mounted Police noticed somethin' queer one mornin', comin' slow across the Yukon from the mouth o' the Pelly. He got a glass and made out a man haulin' a sled. He was always fallin' down and gettin' up again—fallin' and risin', fallin' and risin'; but comin' on. He reported, and the sergeant took the dogs and hit the trail.

" When he got near he saw a totterin' figure leanin' forward on the rope and creepin' inch by inch. He couldn't see any face at all—just a mass of ice bulgin' out irregular. He was stumblin' like a blind man, but always a-comin'. When the sergeant got within fifty yards Jim must of seen him, for he stopped, jerked one hand a little and fell down in a heap.

" When they got us in, the doctor said, Jim was nearer dead than me. His face was frozen deep, and his hands; and he was starved to skin and bone. They'd a hard time keepin' what little life there was left from winkin' out. They got him to bed, and for three days he never moved. The word got around the Post what he had done, and they figured Jim must of been about six weeks comin' down that river, draggin' me. The police boys just wouldn't let Jim die. They

took turns sittin' up with him, and scrapped for the chance of takin' care of him.

"Me? Oh, I was all right. I hadn't lost much beef. What with plaster casts, and pulleys to my feet, and miles of bandages, the doctors say I'll be as good as new. It'll take some time; but I'm gettin' there.

"But, Parson,—about this pardner of mine. He's just ornery, dirty Cussin' Jim. But lyin' here, thinkin' about what he done for me, the wonder grows as high as the stars; and somehow, the dirt fades away and he looms a lot higher than any of them meek, soft-handed saints we read about. They just set still and let the lions eat 'em; but Jim put up the biggest fight in the world—not for himself—for me.

"Now, Jim doesn't favor the picture of any angel I ever seen, and I reckon he wouldn't know what to do with a harp; but if they don't let him into heaven they may just shut me out, that's all. They don't make any better Christians than him, to my thinkin', in spite of his cussin'. That's just his way of prayin', anyhow. What's that John Hay's pome says about

'Christ's not agoin' to be too hard
On a man who died for men'?

Die! Why, Jim died a thousand deaths for me."

The Parson sat long with his head on his hand. Martin's eyes were streaming, and his own were full of mist. Martin's creed didn't fit in with any theological system that he could think of; but he hadn't the heart to rebuke it. His mind visualized that gaunt, uncouth, frost-covered figure, fighting his way along the weary miles of river, against the savage cold, the

blockade of the rough ice, the gritty snow, hunger, exhaustion—and the rough frontiersman rose to heroic proportions. He saw the lonely river with its enveloping mountains, the snow-laden trees slowly wheeling into position, the helpless figure on the sled, and the lean, hungry, tired but determined soldier of the frost, waging his dauntless battle for the life of his friend against such fearful odds. He murmured to himself "Greater love hath no man than this," and "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

At last he looked up, and there sat Jim at the head of the bed as if he had never left—watching him.

The Parson stood up and stepped forward, and Jim instinctively stood and faced him. "My friend," said the Parson, and his voice was vibrant, "I am going to ask of you a favor, a very great favor. I ask the honor of being allowed to shake hands with a *man*."

And the gnarled, grimy hand and the big, clean one met in a grip that had no reserve or suspicion in it—the grip of a lifelong friendship.

XXVII

THE CLAN TOGETHER

THE Parson had many perplexing questions to solve—his church to build and organize, the new hospital, the exploration of the country beyond—but most puzzling of all were questions of personality—how to reach and help the complex population of the Klondike. Each man presented a different problem.

Cussin' Jim was one of the hardest nuts to crack. The man's armor of shyness and reserve seemed impenetrable. Any attempt to get his confidence and draw him out only drove him further into his shell. Although Jim would come to the meetings and frequented the reading room, he would come and go silently and attempts at opening a conversation with him brought no response but the briefest replies. He seemed afraid to open his mouth.

The garrulous Martin, who was growing stronger every day, and was now able to hobble to the Parson's cabin by the help of a pair of crutches Jim had made him, offered two explanations of this reserve: "Jim's afraid he'll let slip a cuss-word," and "Jim's broke."

When questioned about this latter statement Martin said, "Well, you know Jim didn't lift a pick this winter with me like a rack o' broken bones hangin'

round his neck. He an' me et up his grub an' now ther's hardly any left. He says he never worked for wages in his life and is too old to begin. He's proud as Lucifer and he's mortal afeared that somebody'll find out he's broke an' offer to do suthin' for him."

That was the Parson's problem—how to help Jim and Martin. It was solved for him unexpectedly. Passing by the Lucky Number Claim early in May, Lanky Bill called him into his cabin.

"Say, Parson," he said, lowering his voice and glancing around to see if anybody was within earshot, "do you see those men climbing French Hill yonder? Well, I'll give you a tip. A man who was dragging some wood across the brow of the hill where it's thawed bare scraped up a twenty-dollar nugget. Only a few are wise to it yet, but you might put the College Boys on to it, and anybody else who needs to strike it. Let them head off these men who are driving stakes and they may strike the pay further down toward Bonanza."

The Parson made five miles an hour to the lay of the College Boys, and started three of them to the new diggings. Then he hurried to Dawson and to Cussin' Jim's little, dark cabin.

"My friend," he said, "here is a chance for you to change your streak of hard luck into a pay-streak;" and he told him of the new find.

Jim lost no time. A few pertinent questions and he started up the trail, his snowshoes strapped to his back that he might be able to climb the hill on lower Eldorado and perhaps find a rich spot lower down

the stream than the excited men on French Hill would be apt to go. The result was that Jim struck it, and he and his partner, Martin, had each a snug little fortune before the end of the summer.

"Mon! But there's a big flood comin'."

Scotty was standing with Schofield and Viva at the point above Dawson where the Klondike meets the Yukon. The warm air of summer flooded the land, although patches of snow were everywhere, and the hill-tops were still white.

"What has become of Spring?" queried Viva. "She seems to have passed us by."

"There is no spring or autumn in this land," said the Parson; "the summer comes shouting upon the heels of winter."

"It's breaking!" called Scotty, pointing to the river. For days there had been thin streams of water running here and there over the surface of the Yukon. The Klondike was already clear and great cakes of ice had been piled by its current upon the ice of the Yukon. Ominous grumbling and cracking sounds were heard up and down the river. From the hills back of Dawson and on the other side of the river dashed numberless streams of water, many of them foaming in falls and cascades down the hill-sides.

"Oh, see it come, it's the break-up!" cried Viva, jumping up and down and tossing her hands in the air.

A moving army of ice cakes, rolling, tossing, leaping into the air with spray flying, was charging down

the river; sometimes a high white wall would be erected suddenly almost across the river as if by unseen masons, and, standing solid a moment, would suddenly melt and dissolve, great flat cakes of ice sinking down into the current and others leaping to take their places. A roaring, rending sound as of an avalanche filled the air.

"The break-up!" came in shouts from the assembling crowds of miners, and all rushed to the river's bank.

The swollen current, pressing with the weight of a million tons, crumpled the edges of the thick ice upon the river as a man crumples a piece of paper in his hand. The great cakes of ice, jamming down to the river's bed, would form a dam clear across the river, and the eight-mile current, full of other cakes of ice, would heap the wall higher and higher like a great reservoir held in walls of masonry. Then that wall in turn would collapse and, with another fortress captured by the enemy, the charging ice would rush down the river again.

As the army of leaping and roaring ice cakes moved opposite the Point, the water rushed against the banks, swelling higher and higher. Down on the flats by the mouth of the Klondike, miners were rushing from their cabins, carrying with them what they could grasp, and frantically making for the higher banks. The river swelled dangerously near the edge of the high bank and then, the dam of ice coming away again, it would subside, only to arise anew when another jamb was formed down by the lower point.

Mrs. Randall, plump and blooming as before her

illness, and little Kitty, weighing fifteen pounds more than she had last Fall, joined the party on the river bank.

"We are *Sourdoughs,* now," screamed Kitty; "we've seen the ice go out of the Yukon!"

"What a tremendous spectacle!" exulted the Parson. "The walls of our prison are broken, and we are free as the Yukon once more."

"There will be a mighty human flood following this ice," said Schofield. "The last advices down the river said that there were twenty thousand boats at Bennett, Tagish and Le Barge, awaiting the break-up."

"Only those at the foot of Lake Le Barge will come now," said Scotty; "the ice of the lakes will not break for a month yet."

"But we ought to be getting letters and mail now," said Schofield. "It is six weeks since any word came to us from the outside."

"The Colonel and his wife will be coming now," said Mrs. Schofield, who, leaning heavily on her husband's arm, was standing on the bank. "The last letter I got from Mrs. De Long said that they were getting their goods over the Chilcoot Pass and would come as soon as possible after the break-up. I think they intend to sled their goods over the lakes and launch their boat on the Thirty Mile River. They ought to be here in a few days."

"There is a third flood, besides the water and the people," complained Viva. "The mosquitoes are here in greater force than either."

"From the bucketfuls of wigglers we have been

getting from the holes in the ice the last month," said Mrs. Randall, "I would think they had all gone down the Yukon long before this."

"The plague of the Egyptians is upon us," grumbled Scotty. "It's time for the mosquito bar right now."

"Oh, we've had screens on our doors and windows for two weeks," said Kitty.

The joy of the camp knew no bounds; excitement, bustle and song abounded. Poor scurvy-blackened men came crawling from their dark dens and basked in the sun. Axes were ringing on the hill-tops and whipsaws screamed, as men were preparing houses for their families or their partners. Up the creeks the miners who had been lucky enough to get lumber sufficient to build their sluice boxes were shoveling into them their winter dumps. The Mounted Police squads were desperately busy going up and down the creeks on their errands of law and order. Long lines of men were in front of the Commissioner's office, recording claims and assessment work. Hotel buildings and tent bunk-houses were being erected everywhere to accommodate the expected multitudes. Restaurants and shops were being put in readiness. The two great stores had been cleaned out and shelves arranged for the coming goods.

It was two weeks after the break-up of the ice. The De Longs had just arrived in their Yukon boat, and been received by the Parson and Long Sandy into a cabin secured for them, and were invited to eat their first meal in Dawson at Nestlenigh Cabin.

"Oh, how delicious, how heavenly!" and Mrs. De Long clasped her hands in ecstasy, and stretched her feet out under the table until they collided with the legs of the Colonel, who sat opposite. "Two months of sleds and slush and leaky boats and bumpy stick beds and wet blankets and soggy bacon and soda flap-jacks—and then to have that nightmare end in this dream!"

"You don't need to kick me, my dear, to remind me that it is my cue," said the Colonel. "This is better than any dream; it is the most blissful reality in all my experience."

The interior of Nestlenigh Cabin did seem beautiful and restful indeed to the weary travelers. Viva's wonderful caribou head, skillfully mounted by the Lieutenant, adorned, and almost covered, the wall at the end of the room. Under it were the two beds, Mrs. Randall's having for a quilt a priceless fur robe, marvelously fashioned by the Indian women from the skins of the heads and feet of Viva's wolves, foxes, lynxes and wolverines. The bed of the girls had a robe of red fox skins. The floor was completely covered with new rugs of wolf and wolverine skins. The table was almost the whole length of the room, and the tablecloth was of genuine linen, a Christmas gift from the Captain's Lady.

Around the board were seated a joyful little company; Mrs. Randall presiding at its head and Long Sandy at the other end; the De Longs, as the guests of honor, the Schofields, Mr. Bowman and his bride, the Parson, the Lieutenant, Walter and Viva.

Kitty served, flitting from Nestlenigh to Snuggle-Up

Cabin, where the cooking had been done by Mrs. Randall.

"I did so want to make you a cake," apologized Mrs. Randall to Mrs. De Long. "I heard that there was a case of eggs brought down the river and I went to buy some; but the owner was selling them as fast as he could hand them out for two dollars an egg, and that was a little beyond my poke."

"Oh, don't say a word!" implored Mrs. De Long. "I have no wish in all the world that isn't gratified right now, and I'd rather be here at your table in this wonderful cabin and with the Clan around me, than at the Waldorf-Astoria, with Queen Victoria and the President's wife as my hostesses."

"Speaking of prices," said Schofield to the Colonel, "did you hear about the newspapers and our entertainment of two nights ago?"

"No," replied the Colonel. "We have just come and have heard no news."

"Well," said Schofield, "it was whispered to me that a newspaper containing wonderful war news had come down in one of these first boats, and was in the possession of a tenderfoot, who had brought it post-haste from Seattle. It was a Seattle paper of May third, and, therefore, a little over a month old. I ran to get the Parson and we hurried to find the man before he would get onto the value of his five-cent newspaper. We have been so shut in from the outside world that we realized that the whole camp would be crazy for war news. We found the tenderfoot and I offered him ten dollars for his newspaper, and he surrendered it without thinking; afterward he tried to get it back

to sell it for higher rates, but we had paid him and wouldn't surrender the paper. It contained a full account of Dewey's victory at Manila the first of May. Immediately we hiked to Big Bill Magee and got the use of Pioneer Hall for the next night. We sent up Bonanza posthaste for the College Quartet and for the California Poet and his new poem, 'Have you, too, banged at the Chilcoot?' We got covers of boxes and some boards and advertised a meeting.

WONDERFUL WAR NEWS

Great Victory Over Spaniards.

Famous College Quartet will furnish music.
The Poet of the North will recite his new poem.
PIONEER HALL,
From 7 P. M. to 3 A. M. Continuously.
Benefit of St. Mary's Hospital. - Admission $2.50.

"Well, the house was crowded the whole time; as fast as the programme was fully rendered the audience would pass out and another take its place. Of course, it was daylight all night. The Parson and Mr. Bowman and your humble servant did the reading, and the other performers filled in. We read everything except the advertisements—and some of them. We cleared a thousand dollars for Father Justus's hospital.

"Then, last night we found that there were still coming in from the Creeks a lot of men who wanted to hear the news; so we put down the price of admission to one dollar and filled the house again with five audiences, giving the performance from six o'clock in the evening until five this morning. We made six

hundred for the new hospital. As you notice, my voice is about played out; the Parson's and Mr. Bowman's stood it better. The little Poet can hardly whisper to-day."

"I saw an orange and lemon displayed in a window to-day," spoke up the Lieutenant. "I started for the door of the little shack where they were and outran two other men who had seen them at the same time. I bought the two for five dollars, and now the man who sold them is kicking himself that he didn't ask ten for them."

"This matter of high prices," said the Parson, "has both its humorous and pathetic sides. I have never taken more real satisfaction in anything than in a sale I made the other day. An old G. A. R. man from Missouri lives in a little cabin four miles from here on the banks of the Klondike. Passing near his cabin a few days ago I happened to think of him, and remembered that I had not seen him for a couple of months. I found him on the roof of the cabin, which is on the flat and had been flooded by the overflow of the Klondike at the time of the breaking-up of the ice.

"The poor old man has been crippled with the scurvy, and when the flood came was able only to get a few of his things up to the roof, including his blankets and a few hard-tack and a little rice. There he had been living for several days, and although the water had subsided, the interior of the cabin was still a mud-hole.

"'What can I do for you, my old friend?' I asked when I came up.

"The old man is game all right, but he had to cry a little when he saw me. 'I am afraid it's all up with me, Parson,' he said. 'My grub is all spoiled, what little is left of it, and this scurvy has crippled me. I don't know how I am going to get back home. I was hoping to go on the first down-river steamboat, but I'm out of money and have no claims that are worth while, and I don't see how I can make it.'

"I began to hunt around in the mud of the cabin. 'What have you got that you can turn into money?' I asked.

"'Nothing, nothing at all,' he said: 'unless it is a box of nails which I brought in last fall. I am a carpenter.'

"'Nails!' I shouted. 'Man! how many have you?'

"'One hundred and fifty pounds of them,' he said.

"Well, I first hauled the old man on his sled down to the sawmill and left him in good hands in a dry cabin, and then I took the nails and hauled them down here to Dawson. They were rusty, but just what the miners wanted for their sluice boxes. I put up a notice right there in the street, 'Nails for Sale,' and borrowed a pair of scales. In less than an hour I'd sold the nails for two dollars and fifty cents a pound, and trudged back up to my old friend with three hundred and seventy-five dollars—enough to take him back to Old Missouri."

"What have you done with the little Doctor?" asked the Colonel.

"Put him aboard the first steamer bound down the Yukon for the 'Outside,'" replied the Parson. "I don't know which was the more joyful, he or I."

"How about the Chilcoot avalanche?" inquired Mrs. Randall.

"Oh!" shuddered Mrs. De Long, "don't you know that John and I just escaped that?"

"No, tell us about it," chorused the others.

"Well, we started in February to get our outfit over the Pass. John was getting out his paper and had to hire a man to look after his goods. It took us nearly two months to pack our outfit over to Bennett. The most of it is there yet, awaiting the break-up of the lakes. When the goods were all across, the first of April, John and I went over the Pass. It was getting very soft, and there had been a heavy fall of snow just before we came over. All the old-timers were warning the people against traveling over the Pass; but there had been so many warnings by the Sheep Camp men, who wanted to keep travelers in their eating houses and sell them meals at two dollars and fifty cents, that we, like the other fools, paid no heed, but came right on. We got ourselves and our packs to the Summit one evening and rested over night in the Summit tent hotel.

"The next morning it happened. Down on that marching procession, near the Stone House, came the avalanche, burying sixty-five men and one woman under thousands of tons of snow. We felt as if we had escaped by an eyelash. John went back and helped dig out the buried bodies."

"Ah," sighed the Parson, "why will men continue to take these desperate chances for nothing more valuable than gold?"

Sandy, who had, as the Colonel afterward re-

marked, wonderfully changed the last few months and lost his old-time bashfulness, spoke up.

"I don't look upon gold mining as you do, Parson," he said. "It's the most honorable and cleanest business in the world."

"Why, it's nothing but a gamble, a desperate gamble," said the Colonel.

"It's as far as anything can be from gambling," defended Sandy. "In gambling you bet your cards against somebody else's pile and your gain is his loss; in gold mining, it's God's own new, clean, good money, which He has put there for you to find; and your gain is nobody's loss. It is the whole world's gain as well as yours. You add, if you find it, that much to the wealth of the world; and your labor and your time spent bring you health and enrich your life more than the getting of the gold. It's worth far more than what it costs."

"Good for you, Uncle Sandy," said Viva, taking the old miner's hand and rubbing her cheek upon it. "Walter and I are going to be Alaska miners, and we'll not have the gold-lust nor the ruin of it either."

"You cheer me up," said the Parson. "If only the rest of the Stampeders would look at it in that way."

"What of the Soapy Smith gang?" asked Schofield.

"Haven't you heard?" said the Colonel. "The blackleg has gone to his own place. After his gang had been robbing and murdering all winter, without the Government officials being able to put a stop to it, we appointed a Vigilance Committee to take measures for the public safety. Soapy tried to break up one of

our meetings, which were held at the end of one of the long wharfs. Marching down the wharf with his gang at his heels, he happened to find in one of the guards placed on the wharf by the Committee, a man whom he could not bluff. The two fired at the same instant, and Soapy was shot through the heart. The guard was injured so that he died within two or three days. The gang tock to the woods until starved out, and now they have been sent to Sitka for trial. That is, I hope, the end of crooked rule in Skagway."

"How about you, Uncle Sandy?" asked Mrs. De Long.

The old miner smiled. "It is well with me; all to the good," he said.

"You have struck it, then?" said the lady eagerly.

"Ah, yes!" he replied. "Yes, indeed, I have struck it."

"How much have you made?"

"Made!" The old man looked proudly around. "Do you need to ask? That," nodding to Mrs. Randall, "and that," to Viva, "and that," motioning to Kitty as she came in with some dishes, "and a son at Eldorado; and my latest acquisition is this," motioning over to Walters.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. De Long. "Yes, of course. But the gold; have you struck it in your Eldorado mine?"

"Well, no, not yet," he said slowly and with a smile. "Tom and I have put down our eleventh dry hole, and are just starting on the twelfth."

"Then you haven't made any money?"

"How does the account stand, Kitty?" asked the

old miner; and to Mrs. De Long, "she's our bookkeeper, you know."

Kitty brought out the thin little book which served as a ledger.

"We started in with eleven thousand," she said, "and Auntie May and Viva and I have earned five thousand with our needles and Viva's gun and what Lanky Bill gave me from his claim. That's sixteen thousand on the credit side."

"How much on the other side?" asked the Colonel.

"Well, there's about two thousand in cash left," she said, "and the cabins and the Eldorado claim."

"Why, your are going right into a hole financially," exclaimed Mrs. De Long.

Walter spoke up quickly. "Now, Uncle Sandy, you are not playing fair. If you have adopted me as a son, and you say you have," looking with his soul in his eyes at Viva, "you have got to let me have a part in the support of the Family; and you are not going to wait until Viva and I are married either. You didn't wait that long before adopting Tom and me."

Then turning to Mrs. De Long, he went on: "I don't know just how our lay on Bonanza is going to turn out, but Scotty is a shrewd miner and is managing things splendidly. When he drew up the lease in taking the lay he made the owner give us sixty per cent. of the gross output, and inserted a clause, which is going to be of great advantage to us. This Canadian Government has assessed the enormous tax of ten per cent. on the output of the gold in the Klondike. For many of the laymen that means that they must surrender all their profits to the Canadian authorities,

for their outlay in working the lays has been almost equal to their profit. But Scotty had the lease drawn up in such a way that the owner of our claim has to pay all the taxes. Scotty selected the lay very wisely, and he thinks that each of us will clean up fifty thousand dollars. Put that down on the credit side of the Family, Kitty."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said old Sandy. "Walter and Viva will need all that."

"Now, Uncle Sandy," said the imperious Viva, "you are getting harder to manage in your old age. Do you suppose that Walter and I are going to be separated from you, and that our marriage will make any difference? It's all in the Family, I tell you, and always will be. You and Auntie May are going to still be around and father and mother us wherever we go, unless—" and she looked toward the Parson.

He came up manfully. "You will have to count Mrs. Randall out," he said. "She is to take my name and go with me wherever I go. We will spend the winter somewhere in Alaska. I expect to claim membership in Sandy's Family, but not a part in its funds. If Mrs. Randall and I cannot be contributing members of the firm we can hardly consent to draw its money."

"Well, well, what a dovecote!" exclaimed the Colonel. "I am getting converted to your theories, Parson. This great Stampede is not entirely brutalizing, after all. But I am afraid that the Clan is the great exception."

"No, it is not," replied the Parson. "We may be exceptional in our views of life and the principles we are trying to carry out, but there are thousands of

these Stampeders who would be fit members of our Clan, and would live up to the same principles. The whole Clan will get together before the close of the summer," he continued. "You start up your paper and stand for civil righteousness. I'll go on building the church and the hospital, and the rest will live the Big Life of the North as God shall direct them; and, as Long Sandy says, 'it is all to the good.'"

XXVIII

THE GREATEST FIND OF ALL

THE human flood that flowed down the Yukon close upon the flood of water and ice resembled it in more than one respect. Like the torrent it came in starts and heads; like the ice the human flood was irregular—surging hither and thither—full of the unexpected; like the water and ice, both destructive and constructive.

The forty or fifty thousand who surged to Dawson in the summer of '98 were as cosmopolitan as the smaller army of '97. There was a greater proportion of experienced miners—hard-bitten old-timers from the gold fields of Australia, South Africa, British Columbia, California and Colorado—men to whom the wilderness was home and the word "hardship" an unintelligible term, except as applied to life in the stifling, squalid, sunless canyons of a city.

There were more Canadians now, coming to work the mines and till the fields of their own country. Canadian officials came to organize a government and erect the new Province of Yukon, with parliament, laws and courts complete—some of these officials to pervert law and justice and insolently exploit the mines and miners for their own gain.

Canadian preachers came—brawny, brainy, resourceful men—forest and farm bred—knowing and

loving the mountains and the wilds and the strong men who explored them.

But still, by far the greater number of the Stampeders of '98 were from the United States, representing every state and every trade and calling. Many of them had wintered at Skagway and Dyea, leisurely packed their goods over the Passes during the late winter and the spring months, made the lumber and put up their boats in a more careful and finished fashion than those of '97 could do, and then brought those goods comfortably, although still with hazard and loss of life, down the Yukon.

The human wave, breaking on the mountainous shores of the Klondike, had its wreckage and its receding surge as promptly and more disastrously than the flood of water and ice. Thousands who had been striving with all their might all winter to get themselves and their goods to the Land of Gold, became discouraged immediately upon reaching the Klondike and ascertaining that the rich claims were limited in number and already staked and being worked by those who had come before them.

The hands of the Parson and the others in the same work were more than full. Every kind of human need was here.

Before the middle of summer, the greatest epidemic of typhoid fever that the North has ever experienced broke out in the Klondike. That great army, living in tents, drinking the seepage of the great impure camp, fell a prey, as all armies must, under like conditions, to the dread scourge. Before the new hospital was finished there was a city of tents around it, in which

were sick men, brought by their friends and literally laid at the feet of the hospital trustees.

The Catholic Hospital, although it added room after room and supplemented its buildings by surrounding tents, was always crowded.

The sick increased so fast that physicians, nurses and ministers were at their wits' ends. There were funerals every day, and often, in distant camps, the dead were hurriedly buried by the busy miners who were unable to procure the services of the clergy.

The Klondike Clan celebrated its anniversary early in September. All its members gathered to a great feast. Scotty and Lanky Bill were the committee that arranged it in a large tent not far from Nestlenigh Cabin. A big range was installed in one end, and under the supervision of Mrs. Randall, ably assisted by Fatty Lee, the viands were made ready.

The Clan were all present, and a Highland Piper from the Old Country, whom Scotty had found and sobered up for the occasion, skirled his pipes in front of the tent and called the Clan together.

The tent was decorated with the colors of the United States and Canada, intertwined and tastefully arranged by the ladies. The long table, set with genuine porcelain and china dishes on linen tablecloths, was adorned with the colors of the two Nations and with great bouquets of wild flowers.

When sighs of fullness and content were heard around the table and a steaming cup of coffee was placed before each one, the Parson, rapping for order, accepted the position of Toastmaster.

"Our Highland Chief has turned craven and basely deserted his post," he announced. "We will inflict upon him the penalty of dancing the Highland Fling to the music of the pipes for one full hour, or until his partner Viva is exhausted. Before proceeding with the programme, which is no programme at all, but simply an informal experience meeting and the telling of plans for the future, we will introduce the latest and most important member of the Clan—Miss Klondie Alaska Schofield will now respond to the toast 'The Arctic Queen.'"

Amid tumultous applause Mrs. Schofield dipped into a wonderfully made Indian basket crib, and produced for the admiration of the Clan her month-old baby girl. An elaborate nugget chain, each nugget the gift of an individual member of the Clan, surrounded her tiny shoulders, and her wiggles and gurgles were accepted as the speech of the evening.

"The Secretary will call the roll," continued the Parson, "and the motto given by each will be the toast to which he or she is to respond. No one is to make a studied speech or moralize, and on any signs of preparedness being detected, the speaker will be immediately called down in disgrace."

"As the Parson was the originator of the Clan idea," said Schofield, "I propose we call his name first. His motto is 'Give the other fellow a lift with his pack.'"

Thus caught, the Parson said, "I will not transgress my own rule by making a speech. The humane and religious work of the camp is only at its beginning,

but is moving smoothly and quickly. Our church is up and the new hospital. The difficulties before us, one by one, have vanished. This big, raw, confused camp is going on to great things. Twenty million dollars in gold have been taken from the ground in a year. We have tried to lift a little of this heavy burden of gold from the necks of the 'Klondike Kings' such as Lanky Bill and Scotty, and take that burden on our own shoulders. We have not been very successful, but we have done our best. You all know the Sagebrush Kid, who has put his saloon just across the street from the church and hospital. I passed by there the other day, and spoke to him as he was standing in his door.

"'Kid,' I said, 'we seem to be close neighbors, you on that corner and I on this,' pointing to the saloon and the church.

"'W-w-well,' he stuttered, 'b-b-between us we-we ought-to-get-the-money.'

"There at Skagway at that first camp you will remember Viva's taking my frying-pan from me and sending me to speak to her aunt. In the letter Mrs. Randall handed me from her pastor, he said that I would receive much more help from her and her niece than I would be able to render them. His words were more than true.

"Friends, take your cups and in this delicious beverage, prepared by our incomparable cook, let us drink to the crowning blessing that God has bestowed upon me and upon this great Northland—Mrs. Randall and Viva Carroll."

The toast was drunk standing and the College

Quartet sang " Annie Laurie " to the accompaniment of the bagpipes.

" As to my future," the Parson continued, " it stretches out in an alluring vista in the companionship of the Klondike's ' Angel of Mercy '! We shall spend it together, I hope, in this great new Empire of the North—Alaska—which is just beginning to rear its majestic form before the eyes of the world."

" The central principle of the Clan," read Schofield, " was suggested by Long Sandy, ' Go the second mile.' "

" When it comes to exemplifying that motto," said the Toastmaster, " every one of us must take a place far behind the one who suggested it. Tallest in stature of the Clan and tallest in moral stature as well, the most modest and at the same time the most majestic figure of the North! Old Friend, what have you got to say? "

" Now, Parson," protested Sandy, overwhelmed with embarrassment, " that's not fair. You know I can't talk to order. I haven't done a thing, not a thing, to help anybody, in comparison with what they have done for me. Look what's come to me the past year! See what I was—a lonely old Indian of the woods; and now see what I have! " and his sweeping gesture included his Family and the whole Clan.

" Have you struck the pay on your claim? " asked Mrs. De Long.

" Tom and I," said the old man with a smile, " have just commenced our sixteenth hole. We got a few colors in the last one, and we are still hunting the pay-streak."

"What is your plan?" asked the Colonel.

"Well," answered Sandy, "my plans seem to have been made for me, and I am not worrying about the future. This Family of mine will stick together no matter how far apart our trails may lie, and I reckon I'll always be on the pay-streak. I'll stick to my Eldorado claim a while longer. Eh, Tom?"

"Well, Uncle Sandy," smiled young Carter, "I reckon it will be as you say. We-all will stick togetheh. But my claim on French Hill has yielded enough to pay foh putting down a few mo' dry holes; and by the time it is worked out, suh, perhaps the dust will eithah be in youah old Eldorado claim, or out of youah eyes."

"Colonel De Long," read Schofield; "motto, 'Give every man what is coming to him.'"

"We tried to do that in Skagway," said the Colonel. "Soapy Smith got his and his gang got theirs, and my wife and I got ours in the slush and discomfort of our trip this spring. Like the Parson, I am bound for the Big Land to the West. I believe it is the great coming country, and I propose to start newspapers in the new camps that are yet to be opened. I am not like the cold-footed man in the restaurant the other day. He had been wildly stampeding up Eldorado over to Dominion, off to Hunker and Gold Run and other Creeks, and found all the claims staked and no chance to realize his hopes. He was thoroughly disgusted and homesick. He came into that restaurant down by the Green Tree, and the waitress came for his order.

"'Oh, bring me the best you have,' he roared; 'I am dead tired and hungry.'

"Presently she set down before him a beautifully browned bird. He stared at it.

"'What's that?' he asked.

"'A ptarmigan,' replied the girl.

"'What did you call it?' he shouted.

"'A ptarmigan.'

"'Spell it, and spell it slow.'

"'P-t-a-r-m-i-g-a-n,' she spelled.

"'I'd call that peter miggan; it must be an Irish bird,' he said. 'But what is it?'

"'Why, it's a kind of wild chicken that lives in this country,' she replied.

"'Lives in this country?' he asked.

"'Why, yes.'

"'And has it wings, and can it fly?'

"'Oh, yes.'

"He pushed the bird away in disgust. 'Take that thing away,' he roared; 'take it away; any bird that's fool enough to stay in this —— country, when it has wings and can fly out, don't fit in my stomach. Bring me some pork and beans.'"

"Mrs. De Long's motto is 'Keep in tune with the music of the mountains,'" announced Schofield.

"Indeed, I am afraid the music has all passed me by, or my ears have been too dull to hear it," said that lady.

"Have you never heard the Parson's frost-music?" asked Viva.

"Why, no," replied Mrs. De Long. "Of course, I will follow John; and this land is getting its grip

on me as well as upon him, but I would like to get my fingers on the keys of a 'grand' once more," and she played an imaginary tune on the tablecloth.

"Walter Walters," announced the Secretary; "motto, 'Play the game.'"

"No one will question that Walter has 'played the game,'" said the Parson. "He seems to be the luckiest winner of all—except myself."

Fatty Lee, the irrepressible, spoke up. "He doesn't play fair. Here are half a dozen of us or more all dead in love with the same girl and all pining away to a shadow for her."

When the hoots and laughter that greeted this subsided, the fat boy continued: "The rest of us were calmly paying our court and commending ourselves by our looks and dignity to the fair one of our admiration. Carter first cuts in and gets himself rescued by Viva. I believe he wrecked his boat on purpose. Then comes this tricky lawyer and goes him one better by striking out on a joy-mush across the West to find the damsel's father. What chance have the rest of us against pettifogging tricks like that? I move that the engagement be declared off, and that we all take a fresh start and let the best man win," and he tapped his rotund chest proudly.

The rest of the College Boys applauded; but Carter and the Lieutenant had been hurt too deeply to join in the fun; and Payson, while he made a brave effort to conceal his feelings under a show of laughter, blushed and lowered his eyes.

The Parson stepped into the breach. "Viva's motto, 'Don't be a quitter,' fits in right here," he

said. "Scotty's name for her, 'The Queen of the Klondike,' has been reiterated by every man in this camp this winter; she has no rival."

"Another rising toast!" called all the men, and again the coffee was sipped and the Quartet sang with unction the College song "Up-i-dee!"

"I am a very insignificant little queen," responded Viva. "I'd be very happy indeed, if it were possible, to spread my affections over the whole Clan; and indeed I do love you all, including Fatty Lee; but I cannot go back on my motto. I will not be a quitter."

"Our Highland Chief has been shamefully neglected," said the Toastmaster. "His motto had to do with the 'Language of the North.'"

"For that matter," said Scotty, "they tell a good story about the Parson. He was on the trail going from Bonanza to Dominion last April, with Lanky Bill's dogs and a loaded sled. The slush was deep and the bumps were many and the trail was in its very worst condition. He met another man coming with another team and a still heavier sled.

"'How's the trail down that way?' asked the Parson.

"I'll not tell you all the mon's answer. It would na do before the ladies; but the air was blue before the man finished swearing about the trail. Then he asked the Parson, 'And how is it up the way you have come?'

"'Oh, just the same, just the same,' replied the Parson."

"Oh, now, Scotty, that's an old chestnut that you have picked off the trees of Colorado," protested the

Parson. "That's been told about every pioneer missionary of the West for the last fifty years. Scotty and his partner Walter have struck it richer, so far as gold is concerned, than any of the rest of the Clan, except Lanky Bill, and I think that it is due to our Scotch-Irish friend's experience as a miner and his good judgment. We congratulate him. What are you going to do after this season, Scotty?"

"Weel," said the miner with his twisted smile, "I'll gang this gait awhile longer. We haven't done so bad, the lad and I, but we're not so rich. We've got some claims of our own now on Gold Hill and Big Skukum and I'll stay by it another year. We'll have a little bridal gift for the twa when they buckle-to."

"Lump the College Boys together under their motto, 'Mush on,'" said the Toastmaster, "and let Payson respond."

"Well," said that young man, "that's just what we intend to do. We've worked hard and have had a limited success. Lungs, here," indicating the boy who had been thought to be consumptive, now the rosy picture of healthful manhood, "has stampeded wisely and well, and at last jumped down on the new strike at French Hill. We got three claims there, shallow and small, which we have worked out in addition to our lay. We are going outside next week with enough to put us all through college, and a little besides to start us in life."

The whole company applauded and the Parson said, "For a band of boys, green as these were and totally without experience, to make good in a pell-mell tussle like this, and at the same time to keep clean and

straight, is one of the pluckiest achievements of the whole North."

The Parson had that rarest gift in a Toastmaster—he knew when to stop. He saw that the roll and motto plan had gone far enough. He would not stir bitter memories in some, or tear open healing heart-wounds in others, or recall failures or past mistakes.

"One thing is certain," he said, "the Clan has fulfilled its mission grandly. Begun partly in jest, it has resulted in a close bond of sympathy and fellowship that has helped us all. I take it that every one of us has found here something very different from that which he expected to find, and something vastly better. Some have learned the impotence and futility of gold; and some have learned the blessedness of gold. The happiest man here—Long Sandy—is thirty thousand dollars poorer than he was a little over a year ago. How is it, old Friend? What is the greatest strike you ever made?"

"My Family," almost shouted the old miner; and Scotty quoted, "He setteth the solitary in families."

"And the rest of you—the big thing you've found here?"

"Health," exulted the young man they called Lungs. "Our education," chorused the other Collegians.

"This big land," said the Colonel, his wife nodding assent. "My place in it," amended the Lieutenant.

"My wife," "My husband," said Mr. and Mrs. Bowman together; and "This little nugget," cried the Schofields, tossing the baby.

"I've found this kid," Lanky Bill said, looking at Kitty, while the girl said, "I've found such friends."

The Southerner was thoughtful. "I'm finding myself, suh," he ventured. The Parson and Mrs. Randall looked at each other, and both said, at the same instant, "You!"

"I've found mighty good hunting for the gold," was Scotty's cryptic sentence. Walter and Viva, with hands clasped, leaned toward each other and murmured, "We have found the greatest thing in the world;" while poor Miller, with swimming eyes, whispered, "I have found God."

"The treasures of heaven and earth are in your answers, Friends," the Parson commented, "and not one of you has mentioned Gold as the Big Thing. Hunting for the gold, you've found something better. The Klondike Clan has made good in a marvelous way, and brought cheer and courage with them.

"Well, our trails fork here. Next week will see the scattering of the Clan. New York, Colorado, California, Alaska, Canada—but the Clan cannot dissolve. It is a Brotherhood closer than blood ties—it is the fellowship of struggle and achievement, the comradeship of the wilderness. Piper, give us 'Auld Lang Syne.'"

And clasping hands the Clan circled the table, moving around it and singing the grand old song.

XXIX

LONG SANDY STRIKES IT RICH

"SAY, Parson, I've got a mighty black crow to pick. I'm thinkin' of institutin' a complaint against ye in Court." It was Martin who spoke, walking into the reading-room, quite erect and using his cane more from habit than from necessity.

"Hello, Martin," greeted the preacher, meeting the incomer with extended hand. "I am glad to see you looking so well. What's your complaint?"

"It's fer alienatin' the affections of my wife. Cussin' Jim has left my bed an' board an' spends his hull time hangin' round you and Long Sandy. Why, he hasn't even give me a cussin' fer a month."

"That's very serious," smiled the Parson. "There must be something very wrong with him. But he hardly says a word to me when he comes here and I never get a chance to speak to him after the meetings."

"That's just it," replied Martin. "You've robbed the man of his languige. He's tryin' to stop swearin', and when the cuss words is left out he hain't got nothin' more to say. I'm afraid he'll break down under the strain."

"Can't you suggest some substitutes?" asked the Parson.

"Well, I gave him the words you suggested, 'Connewabble, Thunder, and By John,' but they don't seem

to fill the bill and he gave 'em up after a trial or two and just sets round an' mopes. I'm afeared if you keep him bottled up like this he'll explode or catch religion or do somethin' else desprit."

"You had better begin by getting religion yourself," laughed the Parson, "and then you can help your partner out. Where is he now?"

"Well," answered Martin, "he's gone up to his claim on Gold Hill. Him an' me will always be deep in your debt for puttin' us wise."

"You are still partners then?" queried the Parson.

"Oh, yes, doggone him," replied Martin. "Here I haven't done a thing all winter and summer but just lay aroun' and eat the grub he got for me. When I told him the gold all belonged to him he broke out agin and give me an old-time cussin'. That was the last, and I haven't riled him up since. I'm goin' out on the boat soon an' I'll have enough to square the man that grub-staked me, an' a little bunch left for the old woman and the kids."

"What will Jim do?" asked the Parson.

"Well, I reckon it's a divorce this time betwixt him an' me. Nothin' can drag him away from the Northwest as long as you an' Long Sandy are in it. I reckon he's up at the old man's claim about now. He says Long Sandy is the whitest man he ever seen."

"I am afraid Sandy is not going to strike it on his claim," said the Parson. "When I went up there the other day I found him all alone, for Tom Carter has gone down to his French Hill claim and is still finding pay there; but Sandy will not give up. He has sunk all his money in the nineteen or twenty holes

he has put down there, and when I visited him he was sitting alone on a little three-legged stool by a tub, with his long whiskers dipping into the water, panning away and finding only a color or two."

"I think that's one of the things that's wearin' Jim out," Martin said—"the thought that old Sandy has done such a deal of hard work and found nuthin; while Jim just plumped down on a little fortune. If he could put a lot of his dust into Sandy's claim unbeknownst to him, I believe he'd do it."

The Parson, breezing into Nestlenigh Cabin one day, found little Kitty convulsed with sobs, while Mrs. Randall and Viva, themselves in tears, were patting and soothing her.

"What's wrong now?" he asked in dismay.

"Nothing wrong, we think," answered the older woman. "Lanky Bill has set aside ten thousand dollars for Kitty's education, and we think of sending her outside to-morrow with the Schofields on the boat down the Yukon. She will buy an outfit at Seattle with her mother's advice and go on to the Eastern college where Viva graduated. We think she has it in her to be a fine musician and a great woman."

Kitty flung herself into the Parson's arms with a fresh burst of tears. "Oh, what do you think I ought to do? It doesn't seem as if I could live apart from Viva. Ought I to take Bill's money?"

"Well," pondered the Parson, "I see no objection to Kitty's taking Lanky Bill's money—if there are no strings to it."

"I think you do Bill an injustice by hinting such a



HE WAS SITTING ALONE BY A TUB, PANNING AWAY AND FINDING ONLY A COLOR OR TWO

thing," defended Mrs. Randall. "He is interested in Kitty simply, so he says, 'as a kid sister.' He says that if she doesn't use that ten thousand it will lie in the Seattle Bank forever in her name. And he says he'll never make any claim to her."

"Then let her take it, by all means," counseled the Parson. "It will do Bill more good to give it to her than it will do her to spend it. When a man like that wants to get the greater blessing by giving, it is simply cruelty and false pride that denies him that blessing. Go ahead, Kitty, and make such a scholar and artist out of yourself as shall make us all prouder of you than of anything else we have found in the North. Alaska needs just the woman you will be."

"The College Boys are all going out on the same boat," said Viva, "so Mousie will be well taken care of. I wish we could go a ways with them."

"You can, and you will," cried the Parson. "I have passes for all of you as far down the Yukon as we wish to go. We'll do some exploring on the Alaska side and take the next boat back. Martin is going out on this boat and many other friends. We'll speed them on their way."

"Hail and farewell!" called Walter from the doorway. The girls rushed at him with shouts of laughter. A roll of blankets was strapped on his back, a gun under his arm, an ax and prospector's pick in his belt. By his side stood an immense black and white Malamute dog. The animal was almost completely covered with camp equipment, including fly-tent, coffee pot, frying-pan, kettles and some flour, bacon and beans.

"Why, you've got Big Bill's Whisky!" cried Viva.

"Fair lady, you mistake," laughed Walter. "I have not big Bill's whisky internally or otherwise. The dog is mine by virtue of twenty ounces of gold by me paid in hand—Big Bill's hand. And his name is no longer Whisky. He has reformed. He has been re-christened William Jennings Bryan—Billy, for short."

"Where are you going?" clamored the girls.

"Dutch Schmidt and I are going into the mountains near the scene of our hunt last fall on a prospecting trip of a week; I'll be here on your return," and he and Viva disappeared for a moment into Snuggle-Up Cabin.

"Why, there is Cussin' Jim," cried Viva, ten days later as they approached the dock, discerning in the crowd that flocked to meet the steamer, his tall, thin form and hatchet face. "I wonder what brings him. He doesn't generally like such crowds as this."

"He is signaling to us," cried the Parson; "somebody must be in trouble."

The gaunt form of Jim edged through the crowd and hurried up the plank to the steamer's deck. Through the grime of his face appeared lines of anxiety and fear the Parson had never seen there before.

"What is it, Jim?" asked the preacher.

"Long Sandy," faltered the man. "He's d-dog-dar—well, he's hurt."

"Oh, what is it, Jim?" cried the white-faced Viva. "Where is he?"

"Foot cut," said the gaunt one laconically; "up on his Eldorado claim."

"Oh, Parson," urged the girl, "hurry! Let us start right away."

"You come with us, Jim," cried the Parson. "Where's Scotty?"

"With Sandy. I sent him up there from his claim as I came down this morning."

"And Tom?" asked Viva.

"He's there too."

"We'll bring Sandy down here for you to nurse," said the Parson to Mrs. Randall.

The anxious little group hurried through the crowd and up the street.

"Bill," hailed the Parson, as they passed the big man's saloon, "Long Sandy's badly hurt at his Eldorado claim. We are going up after him."

"I'll go right along with you," answered Big Bill without a moment's hesitation.

At the new hospital they paused for Dr. Chamberlain, who instantly packed instruments and bandages and went with them.

It was eight o'clock in the evening when the rescue party set out upon their all-night mush of twenty-six miles. They took a stretcher procured from the Mounted Police Post, and each carried a little roll of blankets.

Viva was dressed as comfortably and her movements more free than the men; a corduroy suit with skirt to her knees, high stout hobnailed boots, canvas leggings and gray waterproof cap. The fall rains had set in and the trail wound through the woods,

twisted among the dumps of the working claims, dodged under dripping sluice boxes, and led through boggy muck beds. There was no good trail; it only presented various degrees of badness.

Cussin' Jim led the group of friends, his long legs moving steadily and rapidly, minding the mud holes not at all. Close after him, and as tireless and swift, came little Viva, leaping the muddy holes, springing from rock to rock at the side of the trail, finding the best road with the sure instinct of an experienced mountaineer.

"She can't keep up that pace long," said Big Bill, who was already puffing, the sweat rolling down his face.

"You will play out much quicker than she," prophesied the Parson. "I have mushed hundreds of miles with her and she has never faltered or lagged behind. If we lay anybody off on this mush it will be you. You have drunk too much beer this year."

"Yes, but I have cut it out now," said Bill. "I'd give a good deal if I'd never started in."

An hour after midnight they reached the Forks and got from the sympathetic Miss Maloney a meal of bacon and eggs and black coffee, for which Big Bill cheerfully paid five dollars for each of them.

"If it was Long Sandy himself," said the Irish woman, "I'd not be chargin' annything; but a rich old whisky-sellin' plutocrat like yourself, Bill, can pay. I'd ought to charge you ten dollars each. Bring Sandy here and I'll take care of him for a month and charge it up to you."

"You have got it on all of us, Miss Maloney," re-

torted Big Bill with a laugh. "You have a hotel, restaurant, gin shop and Eldorado mine, all combined. You'll be a millionaire in another year, and go across the water, and some Italian count will marry you for your money."

Again they took the trail, in deeper mud up Eldorado, until the claims were left behind and Long Sandy's little path ended at his isolated cabin.

Scotty and Tom, hearing the voices, came out to meet them. "He's very weak," said Carter in response to Viva's anxious look. "The ax cut right down through his instep and he almost bled to death. He was here a week before Jim found him, and his wound had become infected. Doctoh, we have done the best we could, but I am mighty glad to turn the case ovah to you."

A cheery hello was called from the cabin. Springing through the door Viva reached the old miner's side. She sank upon her knees on the earthen floor and rubbed her cheek with his hand in the caress he loved so well.

"Ah, Lassie," he said, "my little Lassie! I knew you'd come to see your old uncle strike it rich."

"Has he got pay at last?" asked Big Bill in the door.

"Oh, no," answered Carter. "You don't understand Uncle Sandy. The last hole he put down was just as 'dry' as the rest."

"Then he's flighty," said Bill, shaking his head.

"Doctor," said Sandy, clasping the physician's hand, "you have come to fix the trail a little over the Big Divide. You might knock a few points off the

rocks but you can't keep me from mushing over it." "Bill," he said, "old friend, I have got the biggest prospect I've ever struck and I'm glad you've come to the clean-up." And so with a cheery word and laugh to each he greeted them.

The Doctor's examination by the light of the candles in the little dark cabin was careful, but brief.

"The foot and leg are badly infected and swollen," he said to the anxious crowd as he joined them outside the cabin. "He lost so much blood that he was too weak to properly care for the wound, and being so long here alone blood-poisoning has set in. Besides, his heart is very weak."

"O, Doctor," cried Viva in anguish, "can nothing be done for him?"

"Nothing to ward off the inevitable," was the Doctor's reply. "The end will come in not less than a week or two at the farthest."

As they came back into the cabin Long Sandy laughed. "What did I tell you," he said. "It's big news, though it will be a sore wrench to leave my Family. Lassie, my Pet, you are not crying? Tears will only muddy the trail that I've got to mush over. I am going to perform the most simple, natural and beautiful act of my life, and you mustn't look upon it in any other way. Come here, you little Blessing, and rub your cheek against my hand. I don't think the angels can do anything that will please me better than that."

"Ye must all take your rest now," commanded Scotty. "We'll breakfast and sleep and eat again, an' after dinner we'll carry him to the Forks and stay at

Miss Maloney's till the morning; and make it down to Dawson to-morrow evening."

And so they did, Viva curling up like a squirrel in the bunk over Uncle Sandy's, and the rest disposing themselves on the other bunks and on the floor. Scotty and Tom only remained awake with Long Sandy, who with indomitable will repressed every sigh or groan of pain that might disturb his Lassie's rest.

The task that confronted the six stalwart men was a difficult one. Sandy, though spare, was heavy. There was no road along which two could march abreast; but only a narrow path, crooked, slippery, rough and muddy. Stumbling over roots and stumps, slipping on clay and on sidling rocks, sinking into moss and mud, they made their way as best they could with their precious burden. Viva ran alongside whenever the trail permitted, and ahead or behind when it became too narrow, chirping to Uncle Sandy like a bird; and he answered back as cheerily.

Lanky Bill, who had just returned from a trip to Dominion, joined them at Lucky Number Claim to take his share of the labor; and others gave a lift.

"It's a big awkward gossoon ye are, Uncle Sandy, and it's bad judgment ye've shown," scolded Miss Maloney as she received the old miner and helped the men lay him upon a bed prepared in her own sitting room. "Let me make ye a hot Scotch to liven ye up a bit after yer mush."

"Now, Miss Maloney," he laughed, "you know I've never tasted the stuff, and it won't mix up well with the 'Water of Life' that I'm drinking."

Early in the morning the cavalcade was on its way

again, Shorty and Pete coming from their nearby lay to help. The march was slow but without pause, and before sundown Long Sandy was in the best private room in the new log hospital and in the loving and skillful hands of Mrs. Randall.

"It's a darn shame," said Pete, as he stood by the bar of Big Bill's saloon the next morning with Lanky Bill and Shorty. "Here is the best man in all the Northwest, and one of the best miners, down and out. Just one streak of bad luck after another. Working all summer hard putting down one dry hole after another and now going into the jaws of grim death without finding a thing. If that's all God has to give to Christians you kin count me out. Set 'em up again, Bill."

Lanky Bill pushed away his glass. The "Eldorado King" was moody and thoughtful. "It don't look that way to me," he said. "Sandy has opened up a lead that the rest of us have passed by. Eh, Bill?" Then turning to Pete, he said, "Why, the Lucky Number Claim isn't a patchin' to it!"

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Shorty in round-eyed astonishment, while others gathered around to hear of the new strike.

"Lanky's darn near right," said Big Bill, "and I've a big notion to try to get in on Sandy's pay."

"Any chance for us?" Shorty's eyes were eager. "Pete and me has been pegging away for a year now on that lay and haven't made a grub stake."

Lanky Bill winked at Big Bill. "Sure, there's a chance for you," he said to Shorty and Pete. "Go and see Long Sandy; he'll put you wise;" and the

two Bills turned and walked away together with their glasses unemptied.

"Old Sandy's room is like the office of the President of the United States these days," said Walter to the Parson. "There is always a crowd waiting outside for an audience. Dr. Chamberlain and Auntie May are his private secretaries and I'm porter to usher in the office-seekers and see that there is no rush." The young man had returned from his prospecting trip and was installed as one of Sandy's nurses, his strong arms lifting the old man as easily as though he were a child. Cussin' Jim was his alternate, as strong and more skillful than Walter.

"Let the boys come, let them come!" old Sandy would cry. "The more the better. We've got a lot to talk about before I hit the trail."

Within this small room all was light and cheer. Auntie May in white nurse's dress and cap, and Viva with white dress and gray-green ribbon to match her eyes, were always there. The Parson came in whenever his duties to the great camp permitted. Freshly picked flowers were on the stand, the white canvas walls were decorated with bright pictures culled from magazines brought in from the "Outside." There was light in the room, sunlight and the other Light that arises for and from every man who is like the one who lay upon the bed.

Long Sandy was in constant pain, and he would not take the opiates which the Doctor wished to administer. "Don't draw the curtains over the windows of my mind," Long Sandy said to the physician. "I

can stand this a few days, and I want to see the boys and talk with them."

"Bill says you've made a mighty lucky strike. Would you mind telling us about it?" said Pete, as he and Shorty and Lanky Bill sat by the old miner's bedside. Auntie May hovered about the bed, Viva sat upon it, her cheek on Sandy's hand, while Cussin' Jim and the Parson, watchful and silent, sat at its foot.

"Sure, boys," said Sandy, smiling. "The Parson here has the location notices. Would you mind reading them, Parson?"

The minister reached under Sandy's pillow and drew forth the little well-worn Testament. "I have marked the descriptions," said Sandy. "There's no mistaking them; it's the richest lead ever opened." And the minister read:

"The building of the wall of the City was jasper and the City was pure gold like unto pure glass. And the street of the City was pure gold, transparent as glass."

Shorty and Pete looked at each other, their faces red. "You have put one over on us," said Shorty to Lanky Bill.

"No, boys," said Sandy gently, "we're not fooling you or springing any trap, and I'm not preaching to you. This is the most genuine claim in the world, and I'd like to see you on the pay. Think of it, gold so plentiful that they use it for pavements, and so pure that the light shines through it like glass. I'm thinking it will take a mighty lot of mining to get all that gold. You don't suppose that the men who are lucky

enough to get into that camp are going to be let hang around and do nothing but loll on flower beds and play with harps, do you? It's going to take a big lot of prospecting and mining to provide all that gold, if they use it as common as that. Now I'm nothing but an old miner and prospector; I don't know any other calling; I'd be lost in a crowd, and the lawyers and doctors and big merchants in the city could put it all over me; but, when it comes to hunting for gold, I'm right there. Another place in that book it says that gold is found away off in the wilderness and that the miners sink down shafts there to get it. Why shouldn't I be a prospector and miner in that land as well as in this?"

"Do you mean it?" asked Shorty doubtfully.

"Yes," answered the old miner. "I have got a big Friend, boys, who has put me wise to this location, and blazed the trail that I struck when I was a young man and that I have tried to follow ever since. You've got to be a little careful of what you take in your pack on that trail, and observe the mining laws when you make your location, but it's the easiest claim to locate that I know, and nobody's going to jump it or take it away from you. You can't buy anybody else's claim; you have got to set the stakes yourself. There is plenty of room in that Valley where the Big River of the 'Water of Life' flows and it's just over the Big Divide. I wish you'd hit the trail with me, boys."

The old miner's voice was growing weak, but his eyes were bright and a smile was on his rugged face. Lanky Bill's eyes were brimming over; Shorty and

Pete tried to speak but could not; the three arose to go. "Come again, boys; come every day till I mush on; and bring the other boys to see me."

Walter went quietly out after them and spoke to a number of others who were waiting without. "He's got to sleep now, boys; you can come in to-morrow."

"Parson," whispered Long Sandy, when night had come and the hour in which only the Family were permitted in his room, "are you ready to settle up our affairs?"

"What is there to do?" questioned the minister.

"Well, there's not very much, but it's pretty important. It's about the Family. Walter, here, has drawn up my will. I thought I'd just tell you what I wanted done and that would be all that was necessary; but he thought it ought to be put in legal form.

"I've left the Eldorado claim to Tom. I'm afraid there's nothing in it, but he may make a hydraulic or dredging proposition out of it yet. His French Hill claim has given him a start anyhow. Lanky Bill has provided for little Kitty's education. I expect I'll have to get ready a good big house in Heaven for her, for she'll be a great woman. She is to have my nugget watch.

"Lassie and Walter have a good start. They have my cabins here, my guns and other camping traps. They'll live in Alaska and Montana—and I hope most of the time in this big Northwest—the best land under the sun, to my thinking.

"I find there's about a thousand dollars of my dust left in the Company's safe. That is for May. I wanted to get more for her, but you and she will

'want for no good thing.' I have that on the best authority."

"Have you any directions about putting the shell away?" inquired the Parson.

"Don't make any fuss about burying me or go to any expense," replied Sandy. "Just a plain box of fir, and some of the old Forty Mile and Circle Boys to carry it. No crape or black gloves or any such foolishness. The College Boys and Kitty are gone, but there will be plenty to sing 'Rock of Ages,' and you can read them something about the Camp I'm making for and the trail that leads to it.

"And now, the important thing: I want to see my Lassie and May put in good hands before I go. We'll have the weddings in the new church to-morrow, and Jim and the two Bills and the Doctor will take me there. Doc has promised to keep me on this side of the Divide for a day or two, but there's no time to lose."

And so it was. The whole camp was there in the church or around it. Simple and sweet was the ceremony, the Parson saying the words that united the younger pair; and Mr. Bowman repeating the same form for him and Mrs. Randall. Very sweet and happy the brides looked; and very proud and happy the grooms. Long Sandy was the Best Man for both couples, and the happiest one of all.

And three days thereafter there was another great assemblage at the church, no more solemn and hardly less cheerful than the double wedding. Father Justus and Mr. Bowman were on the platform. Other words, as simple, as sweet, as joyful were read from

the same Book. And here, as before, Long Sandy, looking very majestic and grand, and wearing, as before, a smile upon his face, was the central figure.

It was more a triumphal procession than a funeral cortège that wound to the little cemetery—and there the grandly simple old man of the wilderness—all that was left on earth of him—was lowered into the frozen earth by the side of Viva's father.

That evening the Parson and his wife were sitting in Nestlenigh Cabin. Walter and Viva had gone home to Snuggle-Up Cabin. A knock came at the door and the three old-timers, the two Bills and Cussin' Jim, came in. Big Bill was the spokesman, and came to the point at once.

"Parson," he said, "we've been talkin' things over. Old Sandy's got us beat. We're not like him—nobody in all the North is. But we'd like to hit his trail and get in on his pay-streak. Do you think we could?"

"What about your packs?" asked the Parson softly.

"Meanin' my saloon, an' Lanky's drinkin' an' Jim's cussin'? Well, we're unstrappin' them packs. The buckles are pretty rusty, but we're goin' to try to throw 'em off. I've passed up the saloon business for good; Lanky's sworn off, and Jim swears he'll not talk at all if he can't do it without cussin'. It's straight goods with us, Parson. We're readin' Long Sandy's location notices all right. Say, do you think we three old sinners could stake claims alongside of Sandy's?"

"Sure, you can—you have!" said the Parson. "Let us get them recorded right now."

And the four knelt together, and after the Parson's simple and direct petition, the three rugged and storm-beaten men of the Northern wilderness, in quaint miner's phrase, one by one, for the first time since childhood, voiced petitions of faith and love to the great Father of us all.

THE END

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